The Premises and Significance of Abraham Lincoln's Letter to Theodore Canisius.

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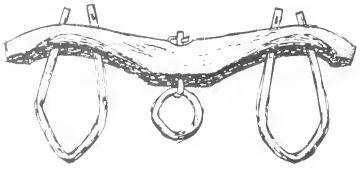

MEMORIAL

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THE PREMISES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S LETTER TO THEODORE CANISIUS

By F. I. Herriott.

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I was anxious to speak with you on politics a little more fully than I can well do in a letter. My main object in such conversation would be to hedge against divisions in the Republican ranks generally, and particularly for the contest of 1860. The point of danger is the temptation in different localities to "platform" for something which will be popular just there, but which, nevertheless, will be a firebrand elsewhere, especially in a national convention. As instances, the movement against foreigners in Massachusetts; * * * in Ohio, to repeal the Fugitive Slave law. * * * In these things there is explosive matter enough to blow up a half a dozen national conventions, if it gets into them.—A. Lincoln to Schuyler Colfax, July 6, 1859.

In its issue of May 25, 1859, *The Daily Express and Herald* of Dubuque, Iowa, the most influential Democratic paper in the state at that time, contained the following racy editorial article, the product probably of the editor's own pen, Mr. J. B. Dorr's:

The Leaders Panic Stricken

A class "in definitions" was reciting its lessons in school once upon a time, where we were present, when the word "panic" fell to the lot of a boy who had a good deal of native talent, but was rather negligent of his studies. This little fellow abhorred the idea of an appearance of failing and would always say something whether right or wrong. The teacher repeated, "John define 'panic'." John hesitated a moment as if collecting his thoughts, and then spoke up,—"Panic, Sir, Yes, Sir, panic is a dog running most scared to death, with a tin pan at his tail."

This boy's definition of panic was forcibly brought to mind yesterday in looking over a number of our Republican exchanges in which we observed the panic struck running and dodging of the Republican leaders of the Northwestern states. Their alarm is awful, their fright is complete, and they are "running most scared to death,"

as if they were precisely in the predicament of the boy's dog.

The "tin pan" effectively attached to the "narrative" of their party is *the proscriptive action of Republican Massachusetts* and her placing naturalized white men beneath the Negro in political rights. In Massachusetts the party of shams is strong enough to be independent of the German votes, but in the Northwestern states this is not the case. Hence the leaders here are panic stricken, lest the action of their party in that state excite disaffection in the minds of intelligent and honest Germans of this region.

In order, therefore, to prevent this result, these frightened leaders are just now performing some tall feats, by way of endeavoring to run away from the *thing of terror* which eastern Republicanism has firmly fastened on their party. They cannot do it, however. The more they run the more frightened they appear to become, and do all they can, they still feel the dreaded thing clinging to their cowering carcasses—they fear it will be the death of them, and probably it will.

The first symptoms of terror among them in this portion of the Union, were shown by the "Republican State Central Committee" of this State, in their issue of a set of resolutions condemning the action of their Massachusetts brethren in the name of the party in Iowa.—This document was followed by letters from the Congressional delegation. About the same time with these the panic began to operate among the leaders in Illinois and Wisconsin, and it has increased until the present time. It now seems to be at its highest pitch, and the whole brood of Republican leaders from Lincoln down to Wentworth are uttering their disclaimers, issuing letters deprecatory and denunciative, and presenting to the mind's eye the picture of a hundred howling curs in the same predicament as the boy's panic stricken dog.

Well, it is none of our funeral. * * *

The panic thus particularly referred to by Mr. Dorr's paper was the nation-wide disturbance produced among German Republicans and in consequence among the leaders and managers of the Republican party by the proposal and final adoption on May 9th in a state referendum by the people of Massachusetts of what was currently called the "Two Year" Amend-

ment to their constitution, whereby the right of voting and holding office in the Old Bay State was denied to the foreign-born until they could certify a residence within the United States of seven years with naturalization as a prerequisite therein. Mr. Dorr's caustic comments, while strong and sweeping, were in fact not without warrant.

The sudden display of energy by the Republican leaders of Iowa and Illinois during April and May in direct and obvious attempts to placate the German voters indicated that the party chiefs experienced a degree of anxiety and perplexity so urgent as to approximate panic. The developments in Iowa and the aggressive measures of the Republican leaders west of the Mississippi attracted general attention, and as the narrative will display, produced the urgency and specific developments in Illinois. Within two weeks of the publication of the resolutions and letters of the leaders in Iowa, sundry resolutions, and explicit and emphatic statements were given forth in Illinois by seven of the foremost leaders of the Republican party, each declaring hostility to the principle and policy of the "Two Year" Amendment of Massachusetts.

Mr. Dorr's editorial exhibits another fact of no small significance. His specific reference to Abraham Lincoln and the mode of the reference signalize in a definite and substantial fashion the high altitude of his interstate reputation and the marked consideration given his views and actions outside of Illinois a year before he was nominated by the National Republican convention at Chicago, May 18, 1860. Mr. Dorr was an editor with no little influence among Democratic partisans. It was to him Senator Stephen A. Douglas addressed a noteworthy letter on June 22, 1859, stating the terms on which he would consent to be a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the Presidency before the Charleston convention; and he had a keen eye for the major facts and personalities in the impending political campaign.

The occasion of Mr. Dorr's reference to Abraham Lincoln was the publication a few days before in the press of Illinois and Iowa, of a letter to a fellow-townsman of Springfield, Dr.

Theodore Canisius, editor of a then recently established German paper, *Illinois Staats-Anzeiger*. Mr. Lincoln's letter was written in response to some particular inquiries addressed to him by a committee of Germans of that city with a view to discovering his attitude towards the principle of the "Two Year" Amendment. The letter had a double, if not a triple, significance. The writer's distinction by reason of the national fame he had achieved in his debates with Senator Douglas in 1858 made any expression of his on matters in controversy in politics a fact of general interest. It was significant because Mr. Lincoln was not accustomed to indulging in epistolary effusions, being more than ordinarily cautious in this respect. The exigency that would elicit such a letter, Mr. Dorr could easily discern, was nothing else than the threatening belligerency of the Germans. The letter was extensively reprinted in the Republican press of the country, both German and American papers publishing it entire.

The letter to Dr. Canisius became, in the present writer's judgment, a primary fact, and perhaps the major fact, in the production of that favorable state of mind among the liberty-loving, progressive Germans that caused them to be reconciled to, and instantly to applaud the nomination of Mr. Lincoln for the Presidency by the Republican party a year later. The substantial truth of this assertion is clearly indicated in the fact that immediately upon the reception of the news that Mr. Lincoln had been nominated at Chicago the Republican and Independent press throughout the country, both German and American, very generally reprinted the letter entire; with the positive assertion, or with the implication, that the Germans and the friends of the foreign-born had therein indubitable proof of the liberality of the Republican candidate for the Presidency on which they could rely with confidence respecting his course, should he be elected, in matters of legislation and public policy affecting the status of the foreign-born.

In what follows the premises of Mr. Lincoln's letter to Dr. Canisius will be exhibited. Two major objectives are chiefly contemplated: first the demonstration of the causal relation of prior developments in Iowa to the formulation and publication

of Mr. Lincoln's letter; and, second, the exhibition of antecedent and collateral developments in Illinois that produced the concentration which constrained Mr. Lincoln to reply to Dr. Canisius.

The important facts as to the origin and nature of the disturbance produced among Republicans in the northwest states by the adoption of the "Two Year" Amendment in Massachusetts, and the range and significance of the agitation resulting—especially as regards Iowa—have been given by the present writer in considerable detail in previous pages.[1] The facts therein presented are assumed in the ensuing exposition. Some of the more important facts as they affect the matter in hand will be briefly restated in order to indicate the premises of the probability of the general and particular connection between the developments in Iowa with the immediate developments in Illinois.

I.

On the morning of April 20, 1859, the political horizon of Iowa displayed no serious sign of storm or portent of gathering cloud. Nevertheless, the currents had for weeks been running rapidly and converging, and concentration had taken place some days before. The Republican State Central Committee, composed of seven party leaders from as many different sections of the state, on April 18, at Des Moines, agreed upon a series of resolutions condemning in the most downright and

[1] See the writer's "The Germans of Davenport and the Chicago Convention of 1860." *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter* for July, 1910, vol. x, pp. 156-163. Also *Ibid*, "The Germans of Iowa and the 'Two Year' Amendment of Massachusetts," *ibid*, Jahrgang 1913, vol. xiii, pp. 202-308. Also, *ibid*, "The Germans in the Gubernatorial Campaign of Iowa in 1859," *ibid*, Jahrgang 1914, vol. xiv, pp. 451-623.

In a paper read at the annual meeting of the Illinois State Historical Society, in Evanston, May 17, 1911, entitled "Massachusetts, the Germans and the Chicago Convention of 1860," the writer dealt at length with the general effect throughout the country of the adoption of the "Two Year" Amendment in Massachusetts and its direct bearing upon the decision of the Chicago convention. The paper was reserved from the *Proceedings* by the writer and is not yet published.

outright language the Legislature of Massachusetts for the passage of a proposal to amend the constitution of that Commonwealth, which would exact a two years residence after naturalization of all foreign born who should thereafter desire to exercise the franchise and hold office. Although the resolutions were formally agreed upon at Des Moines on the 18th, there are a number of reasons for suspecting that the Chairman and some of the members had met at Davenport in the two weeks preceding and conferred upon the advisability of such an expression, being prompted so to do by the increasing discontent among the Germans of eastern Iowa and their evident belligerent disposition in respect of the act proposed in Massachusetts.

The resolutions of the State Central Committee were published at length on April 20th, in *The Weekly Iowa Citizen* at Des Moines, John Teesdale, editor and State Printer. Accompanying the resolutions was an extended Address, "To the Republicans of Massachusetts and of the Union," signed by the Chairman, Mr. John A. Kasson, a resident of Des Moines. He probably was the author of the resolutions as well as of the Address. The Address was a vigorous indictment of the principle of the "Two Year" Amendment and a stirring appeal to the patriotism and prudence of the Republicans of Massachusetts to defeat the pending proposal.

The resolutions promulgated by the State Central Committee in Iowa were given extensive circulation outside the state. They were printed at length on the editorial pages of *The Press and Tribune* of Chicago on April 29th and on the same date they appeared on the editorial page of *The Tribune* of New York; and on May 5th they were given similar distinction on the first page of *The National Era,* at Washington, D. C. All of the papers named had an extensive circulation in the states of the Northwest, particularly Greeley's *Weekly Tribune.*[2]

[2] The circulation of the *Weekly Tribune* in Iowa in the forepart of 1859 was 7,523, more than double the circulation of *The Hawkeye* of Burlington, the most influential and widely read Republican paper in eastern Iowa.

The Germans of Iowa, however, did not seem to be entirely satisfied. Their confidence in the integrity and reliability of the Republican party had been so rudely shocked by the act of the Legislature of Massachusetts controlled by Republicans and nominal liberals and "progressives," as philanthropists and reformers, then, as now-a-days, fondly called themselves, that they were highly suspicious and insisted that all of those charged with the leadership of the party should make the most explicit and unequivocal avowals of their attitude toward the "Two Year" Amendment.

Sometime in the latter part of March some of the leaders among the Germans began to suspect that the Republicans were very wary of expression anent the act proposed in Massachusetts. Probably during March Nicholas J. Rusch, a state senator from Scott county, addressed a long communication to Greeley's *Tribune*, which appeared April 11th, in which he pointed out this fact in language that left no doubt as to the alarm and discontent among the Germans in Iowa. Again, although the resolutions of the Republican state central committee and Mr. Kasson's address were very outspoken, many of the leading Republican papers gave the resolutions no commendation in their editorial columns and a number of the influential party editors sharply criticized Mr. Kasson and his colleagues of the committee for their action, declaring it *ultra vires* and without justification; among others condemning the Committee were, *The Dubuque Daily Times, The Oskaloosa Herald, The Montezuma Republican, The Spirit of the West* of Sigourney, and *The Weekly Nonpareil* of Council Bluffs. It was not strange that the suspicious Germans concluded that the Republicans were not overzealous in their opposition to the proposed act of the Republicans of Massachusetts.

Another fact loomed large in the minds of Germans and enhanced their suspicion and cynical contempt for formal declarations. The first National Republican convention at Philadelphia had concluded their platform with an appeal to "men of all parties," the final words of which were an explicit declaration and pledge of opposition to all legislation or public

policy adversely affecting the naturalized citizens. The plank reading:—"believing that the spirit of our institutions as well as the Constitution of our country guarantees liberty of conscience and equality of rights among citizens, we oppose all legislation impairing their security." As the Republicans of Massachusetts had proposed and submitted to their constituents the "Two Year" Amendment with that unqualified pledge staring them full in the face, and with indignant Germans pressing its obligation upon their consideration, the disturbance and doubts among Germans were normal resultants. Hence the decision to resort to decisive and conclusive measures to discover the position of the Republican leaders, to force them to come out into the open and to stand by their guns. Both in method and in results their maneuvre was in truth, what our military experts would call a reconnoissance in force.

Sometime in April the leaders among the German Republicans of Dubuque, Davenport, Muscatine, Burlington and Keokuk began to correspond and to confer concerning the situation and to concert plans for discovering the true feelings of the standard bearers of the Republican party severally and in such a way as would give no opportunity to fearful or shifty politicians for hedging or dodging or denial.

Whether the manoeuvre agreed upon was first urged at Dubuque, or at Davenport, or at Burlington, or elsewhere; who first suggested or urged concert of action; who took the lead in promoting it; what the various plans suggested were and what the precise plan ultimately agreed upon—all these important items probably are now matters for conjecture. The files of the *Staats Zeitung*, and of the *Volkstribun*, both of Dubuque, of the *Zeitung* of Muscatine and the *Freie Presse* of Burlington have been lost; the columns of *Der Demokrat* of Davenport give us no clue; and the American papers disclose nothing of the prior developments. In view of the intense feeling among the Germans and the noteworthy results of their concert of action it is passing strange that the editors of some of the German papers did not let the public know something of the preliminaries and the persons foremost in the prosecution of the manoeuvre. Sundry facts indicated in the initial

responses obtained by the Germans, however, enable us to learn the names of some of the leaders in the movement and somewhat of their plan of operations.

Consultations and correspondence among the German leaders concluded in a decision to formulate a letter containing a series of specific questions to be presented personally to each of the members of the Congressional Delegation of Iowa, namely to Senator James Harlan and Senator James W. Grimes, and to Colonel Samuel R. Curtis of the First or Southern District, and to Mr. William Vandever of the Second or Northern District. The interrogatories numbered three and were as follows:

> 1. Are you in favor of the Naturalization laws as they now stand, and particularly against all and every extension of the probation time?
>
> 2. Do you regard it a duty of the Republican party as the party of equal rights, to oppose and war upon each and every discrimination that may be attempted to be made between the native born and adopted citizens, as to the right of suffrage?
>
> 3. Do you condemn the late action of the Republicans in the Massachusetts legislature, attempting to exclude the adopted citizens for two years from the ballot box, as unwise, unjust, and uncalled for?

It is not quite clear whether the letter containing the foregoing interrogatories was a circular letter with the same subscribers to each and all presented to the Congressional Delegation or not. From some of the responses it would appear that it was substantially a circular letter; but the names of the initial subscribers seem to have varied more or less with the locality of the Congressman addressed. The number who joined in presenting the questions seem to have been a considerable group—in one instance, at least, exceeding fifty.[3]

[3] Senator Grimes addressed his reply to Messrs. Hillgaertner, Bittmann, Freund, Olshausen, Guelich and others. See *Der Demokrat*, 5 Mai. Senator Harlan addressed his reply to Mr. J. B. Webber and others, *The Hawkeye*, May 11. Col. Curtis' letter of May 13 was directed to Messrs. Kuestenmacher, Henry Richter, Silas Schmidt and "49 others," *The Gate City*, May 19: and Mr. Vandever's response was addressed to Messrs. Richter, Olshausen, Kuestenmacher "and others," *The Buchanan County Guardian*, June 2.

Among the signers were several prominent German leaders; men with reputations exceeding the bounds of their city or state:—Messrs. Theodore Guelich and Theodore Olshausen of Davenport, the first named being the original editor, and the second the then managing editor of *Der Tägliche Demokrat;* and Messrs. Henry Richter, John Bittmann and George Hillgaertner of Dubuque. Mr. Richter was the editor of the *Iowa Staats-Zeitung* and Dr. Hillgaertner was an associate editor with him.

Their circular letter, at least those addressed to Senators Grimes and Harlan appear to have been dated April 30. There is color for the notion that a committee of Germans at Burlington presented the letter addressed to Senator Grimes in person. He either had been forewarned, or he responded with remarkable haste, or assurance; for he replied instantly, on the same day. His reply was printed in *The Hawkeye* on May 3 and appeared at length in *Der Demokrat* at Davenport on May 5. Senator Harlan's response, an extended document of approximately 3500 words, was dated at Mt. Pleasant May 2. It did not appear in *The Hawkeye* until May 11 and in *Der Demokrat* at Davenport until May 13. These dates we shall have occasion later to note are significant.

II.

In the light of the immediate and widespread consequences of the Circular letter addressed to the Congressional Delegation of Iowa by the Germans of eastern Iowa, the authorship of the letter becomes a matter of more than vagrant curiosity. The loss, or disappearance of most of the papers whence authentic information might be obtained; and the utter silence of those editors whose papers are preserved make conclusions wholly a matter of generous inference and surmise.

Four names that appear among those to whom the Republican Congressmen of Iowa sent their replies, and one not named, may not unreasonably be accredited with conceiving and executing the plan composing the letter containing the categorical inquiries—Messrs. Bittmann, Hillgaertner, Guelich

and Olshausen, already mentioned and Mr. Hans Reimer Clausen of Davenport. All, save Mr. Bittmann, were refugees from the arbitrary and oppressive government of their Fatherland; all were liberals of the advanced or radical sort; all were pronounced opponents of Slavery and outspoken in their opposition to its extension and continuance; and all had stood forth in the forefront of many a fight for the furtherance of their ideas.

Mr. Clausen was not specifically named in any of the letters as one of those addressed; but it is inconceivable that a man as active and aggressive as he was in promoting the interests of liberal German-Americans was not active in the conferences that concluded in the German Circular letter. He was among the leaders of the bar of Davenport and was an aggressive and dominant type of leader in practical politics. The letter of April 30, 1859, was in no small measure a repetition and enlargement of a letter addressed by him publicly to Mr. Vandever on September 8, 1858, as a candidate for Congress.[4] His questions were the same, and the method of his maneuvre to elicit an unequivocal expression from Mr. Vandever was precisely followed in 1859; and Mr. Vandever was again one of those addressed in April, 1859. If he did not first suggest or initiate the plan thus to concert action, his letter of 1858 may have served as the prompting suggestion.

Mr. John Bittmann, founder and editor of the *Staats-Zeitung* of Dubuque, and Mr. Theodore Guelich, the founder of *Der Demokrat* of Davenport, were each capable of conceiving the plan of the circular letter and of vigorously pressing matters to an issue, for both were liberals of the irreducible, not to say, irrepressible sort, able, ardent in temperament, and

[4] Mr. Clausen's questions presented to Mr. Vandever, September 8, 1858, as stated above, were the following:

1. Are you willing, when a member of Congress, vigorously and with all your power to oppose any attempt to change the laws of naturalization so as to extend the time of probation?

2. As any legislative measure which prevent a naturalized citizen, after his naturalization for a certain length of time from voting, are equivalent to the extension of the time of probation, are you willing to act for or against such measures?

energetic and courageous in all affairs arousing them to action. In the organization of the Republican party in Iowa in 1856 Mr. Bittmann and Mr. Guelich were two of three German editors who balked because the state convention at Iowa City refused to declare itself plumply against all men and measures affected with Know-Nothingism,[5] and they were not a whit less energetic and outspoken in 1859.

In respect of ability and character, discernment and courage, the same observations are to be made of Mr. Theodore Olshausen, then editor of *Der Demokrat*. He had been a man of distinction in Schleswig-Holstein as a lawyer and statesman. From 1851 to 1856 he had been a resident of St. Louis where he engaged in literary work. In 1856 he took charge of *Der Demokrat* and his distinction added greatly to the influence of that journal in the Mississippi valley. Mr. Olshausen's career later at St. Louis, as the editor of the *Anzeiger des Westens* during the critical days of 1861 when the hearts of the burghers of that fair city were torn with Disunion disclosed that he had the discerning eye, the steady courage and persistent purpose, that would have compassed the manoeuvre in Iowa in 1859, had he discerned the urgency for so doing.

The name of Dr. George Hillgaertner of Dubuque produces strong presumptions in favor of the conclusion that he took the lead in formulating the circular letter of April 30. He fled from Bavaria under sentence of death for his part in the Revolution. He came to the United States about 1852. He accompanied Professor Gottfried Kinkel, as his Private Secretary, in his celebrated tour of our eastern and southern states in his attempt to raise a loan of a million dollars to promote a liberal government in Germany. In the forepart of 1854 he settled in Chicago and immediately became one of the editors of *Der Illinois Staats Zeitung* and one of the influential leaders of the Germans in that city. He was an out-and-out

[5] See *Dubuque Daily Republican,* March 3, 1856, in which the statement signed by Messrs. Bittmann and Guelich and L. Mader of the *Freie Presse* of Burlington, declaring that they will hold aloof from the new party until it is purged of the "impure elements" by which it was then "infested."

opponent of Slavery, of Know-Nothingism and of "Maine-Law-ism" as the drastic "temperance" legislation of those days was designated. In the notable Mass-meeting of the Germans in South Market Hall on the night of March 16, Dr. Hillgaertner was made chairman of the committee on resolutions and brought in and presented the ringing resolutions denouncing Senator Douglas for his course in respect of the part he had taken in the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. Later in that year he spoke out so vigorously against the prevalent propagandism against the foreign-born then raging and against pending proposals or proceedings to restrict or prohibit the manufacture and sale of alcoholic liquors as beverages that a storm broke about his head and mob-violence and judicial proceedings seemed to threaten his liberty, if not his life. His was a character that had no patience for arbitrary government in any form or place and he had an ardent temperament which made him reckless of policy or prudence. It was probably the reaction of his course that caused him in 1855 to sever his connection with the *Staats Zeitung of Chicago* and remove to Dubuque where he became associated with Mr. John Bittmann, as an associate editor in the conduct of the *Staats Zeitung* of that city. In his new home city proslavery sentiment was so preponderant that Democrats fondly called Dubuque "The Gibraltar of the Democracy of Iowa." In Iowa, as in Illinois, Dr. Hillgaertner immediately stepped to the fore in the stormy discussions of that day. When the opponents of Slavery first assembled in a mass-meeting in Dubuque to effect the first local organization of the Republican party in that county, Dr. Hillgaertner was made one of the two secretaries and was one of the two asked to address the meeting. He was sent as a delegate to the first Republican state convention at Iowa City on February 22. Dr. Hillgaertner was a licentiate in law of the University of Munich. His ability as a forceful writer was signified in October, 1859, by a call to join the editorial staff of *Der Westliche Post* of St. Louis and that of *Der Anzeiger des Westens* on which he remained until his death in October, 1865, aged 41.

A conclusion as to the first proposer of the Circular letter

of April 30 and as to its author must be clouded by uncertainty. The similarity of the questions presented to the Congressional Delegation of Iowa in 1859 to those submitted to Mr. Vandever in 1858 by Hans Reimer Clausen strongly suggests him as the man foremost in the matter.

Senator Grimes' reply gives us a definite clue. It was apparently delivered to him at Burlington in person. But the first person named among the addressees is Dr. Hillgaertner. This suggests that Senator Grimes formally responded to the committee of Germans who signed the letter and Dr. Hillgaertner's name, it would seem, headed the array of signatures. As Dr. Hillgaertner was a resident of Dubuque, and probably was not a familiar acquaintance of Senator Grimes, the conclusion would seem fairly to be that Senator Grimes first named the chairman or prime mover in the project. It is customary—although not invariable—for the chairman of a committee to formulate the sentiments of the body or persons interested. There is thus a strong presumption in favor of such a conclusion. The character and career of Dr. Hillgaertner confirms and strengthens this conclusion.[6]

[6] For additional information as to Hans Reimer Clausen see the writer's "Iowa and the First Nomination of Abraham Lincoln," in *The Annals of Iowa*, vol. viii, pp. 205-206; and also his "The Germans of Davenport and the Chicago Convention of 1860," in *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter*, vol. x, pp. 156-163.

See Gue's "Life and Death of Theodore Guelich," *Annals of Iowa*, vol. i, pp. 46-52.

The writer is indebted to Dr. August P. Richter, formerly editor of *Der Demokrat* of Davenport for data as to the careers of John Bittmann and Theodor Olshausen.

For the career of Dr. George Hillgaertner see *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, Jubilee edition, July 4, 1898: *Georg Hillgaertner—Eine biographische Skizze.* [By Dr. Emil Pretorius?] St. Louis, 1866: Deutsche Geschichtsforschung für Missouri, No. 5, April 1914, "Georg Hillgaertner, ein Held der Feder und der That in Deutschland und Amerika," pp. 138-144; and the writer's "The Germans of Chicago and Stephen A. Douglas in 1854," in *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter*, vol. xii, pp. 156-163.

The writer is indebted to Dr. George Minges of Dubuque, Iowa, and to Mr. Wm. A. Kelso of *The Daily Post-Dispatch* of St. Louis for most of the data and references to sources of information as to the career of Dr. Hillgaertner.

Let us now follow developments across the river and discover if there are any causal relations between events in Iowa and those preceding Mr. Lincoln's reply to Dr. Canisius.

III.

The American press of Illinois became aroused to the serious political significance of the proposed "Two Year" Amendment to the constitution of Massachusetts as soon as the press of Iowa. The first noteworthy expression was a striking editorial in *The Press and Tribune* of Chicago, March 21. Its length, its earnestness and vigor demonstrate that the editor saw in the growing agitation of the Germans consequent upon the proposal in Massachusetts, serious and imminent danger threatening the success of the Republican party in both state and nation. In these distant days it is not easy to realize the nature, sweep and significance of the alarm that suddenly took possession of the foremost Republican editors and party leaders of the anti-slavery and Opposition forces in the forepart of 1859 anent the act submitted to the electors of Massachusetts; and in order that this fact may in some part be realized the entire editorial is here reproduced:

VOTE IT DOWN.

> The Legislature of Massachusetts has lately proposed an amendment to the constitution of that state restricting the right of voting, among adopted citizens, to such as have been two years naturalized. The amendment is to be submitted to the people at the next general election. We hope that it may be voted down; and that the Republican party of the Commonwealth will be preeminent in its opposition to the proposed change. It is due to the integrity of our organization, composed as it is of the masses of the educated foreigners of all nationalities that a measure in itself so unjust and unexpected—one against which they supposed that the Republican National Convention at Philadelphia in 1856 had given them a sufficient guaranty—should meet with its quietus by Republican hands. Good faith and fair dealing with those who separated themselves from the bogus Democracy to assist the party of Freedom in the accomplishment of the

results which it proposes—who have for the sake of principle been willing to fraternize with Know Nothings, their most deadly enemies—and who have, in their action on national questions at issue between parties, displayed a degree of patriotism and fidelity which many an American might imitate with advantage,—good faith to these demands that there should be no hesitation, no dodging, no compromises in this thing. It must be killed, or Republicanism in all the Northwestern States and not a few of the eastern States is needlessly and imminently imperilled!

While we speak thus decidedly, let not our Massachusetts friends understand that the Republicans of Illinois and the adjoining states, where the value of the aid of the adopted citizens in the progress of the Republican principles is recognized and appreciated, ask for a continuance of the naturalization laws as they are. Our Germans, Scandinavians, English, Protestant Irish and French, to a man, will not only assent to, but gladly declare themselves in favor of an important change. They see as clearly as Americans can the frauds which, under the existing law, may be and are perpetrated, and they will, we are assured, co-operate with whomsoever will take the lead in the legislation that may be necessary for greater security of their inestimable rights. They will cordially agree that no man shall vote within two years of the date of his past papers, if those papers can be obtained by a three years residence; or, what is better still, they will consent that five years may intervene between the date of the naturalization papers, and the first exercise of the elective franchise, provided that naturalization may take place within the first year's residence in the country. But they demand, and justly enough, that the law shall be a law of Congress uniform in action and universal in its application; and it is a wonder that the members of the Massachusetts Legislature could not so far respect their principles as to memorialize Congress for an enactment which all Republicans, native and adopted, might support, rather than throw the element of discord into our political discussions which should be directed towards the best methods of releasing the country from the wicked rule of the Slave Democracy.

It is time, however, that this question misnamed Americanism should be met, and that the abuses of the elective franchise, by which the Democracy of the North

usually secure their triumphs, should be prevented. We are not afraid of the agitation which will follow a reopening of the whole matter. We know that the adopted citizens working with the Republican party for the principles of freedom are sincerely desirous of adopting any just measures for securing purity in our elections, preventing the illegal naturalizations of aliens, and guarding the perfect expression of the popular will as Americans themselves. The experience of the past six years has taught them that they have nothing in the way of intolerance and proscription to fear from the American people. The bugbear of Know-Nothingism has lost its terror, and as might be expected of a body of men who enjoy here the rational liberty they have been denied elsewhere, they grow more and more solicitous to preserve that liberty to themselves, and to hand it down to their children unimpaired. Massachusetts owes it to these men to put under foot the injustice which her legislators have proposed.

The editorial was widely quoted[7] and it was unquestionably one of the decisive expressions that operated powerfully in the furious discussion that immediately swept over the country. On March 25 the *Daily Illinois State Journal* at Springfield published a half column editorial denouncing the measure pending in the Old Bay State. Its drift and energy may be inferred from its title: "Massachusetts' Constitution—Shameful Attempt at Proscription."

On March 24 the Republican State Central Committee of Wisconsin agreed upon and published an Address "To the People of Wisconsin." Its occasion was the act submitted to the voters of Massachusetts. After citing a series of resolutions adopted by the state convention of their party in 1857 the Committee condemn in no uncertain terms the proposed Amendment in the Old Bay State and they appeal to their Republican confreres in Massachusetts to "efface the single stain upon that escutcheon which the Republicans of Massachusetts have so nobly borne." This pronouncement was published in *The Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* in its issue of March 28.

[7] Thus *The Davenport Daily Gazette* on March 31 cited from it at length in an editorial; and Garrison's *Liberator* in Boston reprinted it entire in the issue of April 8.

The next day *The Press and Tribune* of Chicago again dealt with "Massachusetts and the Naturalization Laws," and observed: "Everywhere the Republicans are speaking out manfully and independently against the recent action of the Massachusetts Legislature. . . . There is no divided opinion upon the subject in any of the free states of the Union, and it is our deliberate conviction that even in Massachusetts the Republicans will vote in solid phalanx against it." The editorial quotes at length from the statement of the Republican state Central Committee of Wisconsin and concludes with the sentiment and hope: "This is well done, and we hope to see the Republicans of every State in the Union uniting in solemn and emphatic protest against the Massachusetts proposition."

The pressure of public interest was constant for the next day, March 30, *The Press and Tribune* took notice of some "spirited resolutions" adopted by The Young Men's National Republican Association of Cincinnati, Ohio, "condemnatory of the attempt now being made in Massachusetts" and again observes: "The Republicans of Massachusetts owe it to themselves and to their brethren of other states to put an emphatic negative upon the proposed amendment at the polls—a duty we doubt not they will most gladly perform."

Precisely similar sentiments were expressed at Springfield on April 2, in an editorial of the *State Journal* in citing and commenting upon some resolutions adopted at a meeting of Germans of Toledo, Ohio, condemning the act of Massachusetts and appealing to the voters, and particularly to the Republicans of that state to defeat the Amendment. The *Journal* hopes that the Republicans of every state will unite in a "solemn and emphatic protest" against the proscriptive measure submitted in Massachusetts. On April 5 the *Journal* tells its readers that "The Massachusetts Constitution" receives an "emphatic rebuke from Wisconsin"; and on April 8 it again enlarges upon the pending proposal in Massachusetts dealing with sentiments expressed by the Boston *Traveler*.

The notable speech of Mr. Carl Schurz in Faneuil Hall, Boston, on the evening of April 18 on "True Americanism" which was a protest against the principle and policy of the

"Two Year" discrimination and a plea for its defeat, and the remarkable reception accorded the brilliant young German advocate of Milwaukee by the elite of Boston elicited some additional comments from *The Press and Tribune,* April 22, that enhanced the antagonism to such proscriptive legislation.

The same journal on April 29 printed as an editorial article the resolutions of the Republican State Central Committee of Iowa adopted April 18, already referred to. A week later, May 5, under the caption "Massachusetts," the following editorial expression was given in respect of a recently published letter of Senator Henry Wilson to Congressman Gillette of Connecticut:[8]

> With rare courage, but with a degree of devotion to the principles that underlie the Republican movement that might have been expected, Hon. Henry Wilson, Senator from Massachusetts, takes open and decided objections to the two year amendment of the Massachusetts State constitution. His letter on the subject, printed at length in all the Boston newspapers, is an able and exhaustive discussion of the whole subject, so able that we of the West where the foreign element is most powerful, and where its dangers and advantages are properly estimated, cannot see how a Republican can fail to be quieted by its facts and reasonings. Mr. Wilson seems to know, as we do, that that portion of the foreign vote which is not wedded by the Catholic Church to Pro-Slavery Democracy in indissoluble bonds, will gladly join in any just and proper movement by which the abuse of the elective franchise may be prevented. Republican foreigners desire nothing more than the purity of the ballot box, and dread nothing more than the frauds by which its value has been measurably destroyed. They want just and salutary reform; not proscription. * * *
>
> "We thank the Senator in the name of the Republicans of the West, for his timely defense of the principles of the party and the integrity of the organization; and we trust that the appeal which he has made to the good sense and honesty of his state will prove not to have been made in vain."

[8] The initial paragraph of Senator Wilson's letter is reprinted in the writer's article in *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter,* vol. xiii, p. 212-213.

The determination of the "Two Year" Amendment was to be made on May 9 and it is clear that Messrs. Ray and Medill had begun to suspect from sundry signs which they observed in the reports from Massachusetts that the defeat of the proposition was uncertain. For the next day there was published a long leader in which the major purpose was to show that the proposed Amendment and the perplexity of the Republicans were really due to the machinations and plots of the Pro-Slavery Democrats of the Puritan Commonwealth. There were three political parties in Massachusetts—the Republicans, the Americans and the Democrats, and of these the Democrats easily and obviously held "the balance of power." The American party for years had been striving to secure drastic measures restricting the electoral privilege and rights as to public office for naturalized citizens. The Republicans, it was contended, had steadily resisted their adoption. Finally the Democrats perceiving their opportunity had joined with the anti-foreign propagandists and pushed the "Two Year" Amendment through the General Court. The situation in the state at large was more or less the same. The Republicans were working against it: "But the Republicans alone cannot defeat it. Their vote is nearly equal to that of the 'Americans' proper. The Democrats hold the balance of power upon the question; and our advices from Massachusetts lead us to believe that a secret purpose exists on their part to vote for the amendment, partly with the hope of placing the odium of its adoption on the Republicans, and partly because they would really prefer to have the large masses of the anti-slavery foreign population disfranchised. We warn our fellow citizens of foreign birth in advance, of the trick of the slavery propagandists. They may rest assured that the Republicans not only of Massachusetts but everywhere are unanimous in their opposition to the proposed amendment, and that it can only gain a footing through the secret aid and votes of the Democrats. If the results on the 9th should be adverse to what Republicans of every state and of every nationality ardently desire, the Pro-Slavery Democracy of Massachusetts will be responsible for it. The balance of power is in their hands. Watch and see how they use it."

It needs hardly to be observed that *The Press and Tribune* was manifestly hedging against the storm of criticism that would break upon the Republican party in the event the Amendment should carry at the polls. The argument put forth is somewhat fanciful, not to say fallacious. Furthermore it was not correct to say that all the leading Republican papers and party leaders were actively opposed to the Amendment. Even such a stout anti-slavery champion as Gen. Wm. Schouler, then editor of the Boston *Traveler,* supported the Amendment. While Senator Wilson openly opposed its adoption, the majority of the party leaders either openly endorsed it or gave it tacit support. Governor Banks had commended the principle to the legislature and had signed it. Eight of the eleven Congressmen were listed as supporting it, among the number being Charles Francis Adams[9] and Anson Burlingame. As to the iniquity of the Democrats in conspiring to secure the adoption of the measure for petty partisan advantage, Gen. Schouler wrote Salmon P. Chase that the whole project was a scheme of the friends of Senator Seward to undermine Governor Banks among the Germans of the West and thus weaken his strength before the national convention.[10]

IV.

The advices of *The Press and Tribune* as to the prospects of the passage of the "Two Year" Amendment were well founded. The proposal carried at the election May 9. The vote, as is usual with such a popular referendum, was light—21,119 for, and 15,398 against the Amendment. The total vote cast was about one fourth that cast for Fremont and Buchanan in 1856. The measure was rejected in seven of the fourteen counties of the Commonwealth and was given a majority in the other seven. The seven counties wherein the Amendment carried were the most populous counties: namely, Bristol, Essex, Middleessex, Norfolk, Plymouth, Suffolk, and

[9] *New York Tribune,* May 17, 1859.

[10] Wm. Schouler to S. P. Chase (Mss.), Boston, May 3, 1859, in Chase Correspondence in Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Worcester. With the exception of Northhampton, Springfield and Worcester, the Amendment carried in all of the leading cities and towns: e. g., in Boston, Charleston and Cambridge; in Fall River and Gloucester; in Lawrence and Lowell; in Medford, Milford and Newburyport; in Roxbury, Salem and Waltham. Even in Senator Wilson's hometown of Natick the Amendment was carried by a vote of 92 to 86.[11]

Instantly the Democrats realized that they had a new war club with which they could belabor the Republicans and play vigorously upon the sensibilities of the Germans and the foreign born, to the detriment and embarrassment of "the party of liberty and high ideals" that prided itself upon its opposition to slavery and all forms of race discrimination. Under the new Amendment of Massachusetts a Southern Slaveholder, or a runaway slave from the rice swamps of South Carolina or the cotton fields of Mississippi could acquire the complete franchise in respect of the ballot and office-holding by a single year's residence and such types of University bred men as—Charles Bernays, A. Douai, Julius Froebel, Fred. Hassaurek, Fred. Hecker, Carl Heinzen, George Hillgaertner, Francis A. Hoffman, Francis Lieber, Fred. Kapp, Gustav Koerner, Arnold Krekel, Fred Munsch, Theo. Olshausen, E. Pretorious, C. G. Ruemelin, Geo. Schneider, Franz Sigel, Rheinard Solger, G. Struve, J. B. Stallo, Henry Villard and August Willich—these, and scores of like cultured men, would have to live in that Commonwealth seven years before they could exercise the highest privilege of an American citizen. The contrast between the rights of an ignorant, stupid, and mayhap, vicious negro and those of the *literati* of Europe's most renowned seats of learning presented a spectacle in contrasts that would arouse sensitive Germans to the highest pitch of wrath. Such alert, far-seeing editors, as Messrs. Ray and Medill of *The Press and Tribune* early anticipated with what delight the Democrats would descant upon such an odious discrimination.

[11] *Address of His Excellency, Nathaniel P. Banks, to the Two Branches of the Legislature* of Massachusetts. Appendix, pp. ii-xv.

Prior to the first of May the Democratic papers had not given much attention to the proposed Amendment. It was not until they began to perceive how great was the indignation and so manifest the belligerent activities of the German editors and party leaders against the measure that they awakened to its serious strategic importance as a political fact. The first noteworthy expression in *The Chicago Times,* the chief organ of Senator Douglas, was on May 5 in an editorial upon "The Proscription of Foreigners." On May 7 its batteries were again turned upon the Republicans in an editorial with the caption, "A Silly Effort to Shirk Responsibility"; such attempts as that of the *Press and Tribune* to get from under the load of obliquy for the part taken by Republicans in the passage of the act and its submission to the voters eliciting its finest scorn. When the result of the election on May 9 became known *The Times* again laid about with great gusto, saddling upon the Republicans the sole responsibility for the Amendment, precisely as the *Press and Tribune* had prudently forewarned the public would be done by the ungenerous and unscrupulous Democrats.

The *Times* contemptuously asked the *Press and Tribune* to explain and make some sort of a defence for the iniquity wrought. The Republican organ while manifesting the usual contempt and hauteur that editors are wont to exhibit anent the pin-pricks and thrusts of contemporaries did not deem it prudent to ignore the challenge, although it felt constrained to characterize the article of the *Times* as "a column of twaddle;" and on May 14 it presented a half dozen reasons why the Democrats should be directly charged with the offense of conceiving, promoting and producing the odious measure. The reasons given are both interesting and instructive and are briefly summarized:

First, the whole number of votes in Massachusetts is about 150,000. Second, The Democrats in that state number about 50,000 all-told. Third, The total number of votes cast at the election on May 9 was about 40,000, or about one fourth the normal vote of the State. The number who voted *against* the Amendment was *only* about 17,000 (the official count reduced

the number to 15,398). Fourth, Had the Democrats turned out and cast their ballots against the amendment it would have been defeated by more than 25,000 votes. Fifth, The truth is that three-fourths of the Democrats *stayed* at home for the express purpose of letting it pass; and a large majority of those who did go to the polls *voted for it* in order to throw the odium of the measure upon the Republicans. Sixth, Fully three-fourths of all the votes thrown against it were cast by Republicans. No party in Massachusetts was anxious to have the amendment adopted, save the Democratic party which hoped to make a little party capital out of it. The indignation vented by the *Times* was the merest sham. Its editors, in common with all the Democratic politicians in Chicago, were glad that the amendment had been adopted, and if they had lived in Massachusetts would have voted for it just as did the editors of the Boston *Post*.

As Jove himself, as well as the lesser Gods, is wont now and then to nod, and on occasion slump, and anon run amuck, it is not strange that hard pressed editors, especially those who serve as high priests at the oracles, suffer likewise and plunged head formost into the pit of puerilities. The contention of the *Press and Tribune* was compounded of crass assumption and bland assertion, heedless of the prosaic probabilities that usually control common sense and interpretation. If there was a Republican state in the Union it was Massachusetts. The anti-slavery forces, or the Republicans, had general charge of the ship of state; and all the honors and all the pains and penalties of place and power attached to the party in office, responsible for the general administration of affairs. The plea of the *Press and Tribune* in mitigation, or rather in denial of the charge lodged against the Republicans was so obviously futile as to make one conclude that it was a reckless pretense which the editors themselves were aware of and which they would have given short shrift and repudiated with utter contempt had the shoe pinched the foot of the Democratic party. The editorial demonstrates how hard put the Republicans were to "save their face" as the parlance of the street would phrase it. The inanities of the editorial may suggest some-

what of their sense of the desperate straits of the party, should the alarm and belligerent activity of the Germans, then apparent in all of the northern free states west of New England, not be circumvented and confuted. From all points of the horizon they could observe sheet lightning and flashes of fire that meant a gathering storm and the wreckage of party crafts if the indignation and suspiciousness of the Germans could not be allayed and their confidence in the character and good faith of the Republican party renewed.

In full view of the facts just set forth we may now appreciate the remarkable demonstration among the Republican leaders of Illinois during the two weeks between May 6 and May 20.

V.

On Tuesday morning, May 6, *The Press and Tribune* of Chicago contained the following editorial:

LETTER FROM EX-GOV. GRIMES OF IOWA.

We publish in another column a letter from Gov. Grimes of Iowa on the proposed two year Amendment in Massachusetts called out by a note addressed to the Congressional Delegation from that state by a number of leading German citizens. It is an open, frank declaration of sentiment upon the subject involved, and corresponds fully with that entertained by the Republicans, not of Iowa alone but of every State in the Union.

This editorial note calling attention to Senator Grimes'[12] answer to the interrogatories of the Germans of eastern Iowa was given a conspicuous place on the first page in the first column near the top, so that all readers, casual and regular, would be sure to observe and make note of it. The letter which it commends to its readers and to the public is reproduced without abbreviation because of its important bearing upon subsequent developments in Illinois.

To Messrs. Hillgaertner, Bittmann, Freund, Olshausen, Guelich and others:

Gentlemen:

I have just had placed in my hands a copy of your letter to the Congressional Delegation from Iowa, in which you propound to them the following inquiries, viz.:

[12] Mr. Grimes was then the junior Senator of Iowa at Washington, D. C.

"1. Are you in favor of the naturalization laws as they now stand, and particularly against all and every extension of the probation time?

"2. Do you regard it a duty of the Republican party, as the party of equal rights, to oppose and war upon each and every discrimination that may be attempted to be made between the native born and adopted citizens, as to the right of suffrage?

"3. Do you condemn the late action of the Republicans in the Massachusetts Legislature, attempting to exclude the adopted citizens for two years from the ballot box, as unwise, unjust, and uncalled for?"

To each of these interrogations, I respond unhesitatingly in the affirmative.

In regard to the recent action of the Massachusetts Legislature I have this to say: that while I admit that the regulation sought to be adopted is purely of a local character, with which we of Iowa have nothing whatever *directly* to do, and while I would be one of the last men in the world to interfere in the local affairs of a sovereign state, or with the action of any party in that state upon local matters, yet I claim the right to approve or condemn as my judgment may dictate. I believe the action of the Massachusetts Legislature to be based upon a false and dangerous principle, and fraught with evil to the whole country, and not to Massachusetts alone. Hence I condemn it and deplore it, without equivocation or reserve. Knowing how much the proposed constitutional provision will offend their brethren elsewhere, the Republicans of Massachusetts owe it to their party that this amendment shall be overwhelmingly voted down.

Yours truly,

JAMES W. GRIMES.[13]

Burlington, Iowa, April 30, 1859.

The response of Senator Grimes to his German constituents is characterized by a conciseness, explicitness and lucidity that are delightful. There are no *ifs,* or *ands,* or *buts* that leave one in a fog of doubts as to meanings, or fears as to mental reservations. Again, he couples downright and outright assertion with caution and clearcut limitation of the sweep of his declaration. He completely recognizes what may appropriately be designated as "northern states' rights" that in the decade of the Fugitive Slave law and the Dred Scott decision became a major tenet in the work-a-day creed of northern anti-slavery champions that energized, directed and controlled much of the discussion and practical politics and legal controversy carried on in the north by Abolitionists and Republicans, especially after the repeal of the Missouri Compromise in 1854. At the same time he declares in unequivocal language his unqual-

[13] Reprinted in *Weekly State Journal,* May 12.

ified opposition to any disturbance of the *status quo* as regards naturalization and the franchise, and to any sort of discrimination between native and naturalized citizens. Finally, he suggests that while each state should be permitted to go her way and do more or less as she or her citizens may please to do, we have a grand common interest that is nation-wide and manifests itself in our common Federal government. The conduct of one state may affect adversely the feelings, if not the immediate rights, of citizens in all the states in our great Commonwealth. Consequently, if a local law or a policy gives grave offense in other sections and works a revulsion of public sentiment dangerous to the Party preserving or seeking to secure the major common interest, then the rule of comity should control, the major interest should predominate over the minor or local interest. Senator Grimes does not specifically name the approaching presidential contest as the major consideration; but his language and the drift of his thought obviously implies that he had it in contemplation.

The interrogatories quoted in Senator Grimes' letter, the character of the sentiments expressed in his response, and the method of his exposition should be kept constantly in the foreground in considering the developments in Illinois that followed after May 9; for they seem to give us the chief clue to the course of events and to have been a guide or suggestion that controlled the nature and form of expression.

Characterizing Senator Grimes' letter *The Press and Tribune* declared that his sentiments corresponded with those entertained by Republicans of "every state in the Union." The assertion was somewhat stronger than the facts justified; but it correctly stated the situation so far as the foremost anti-slavery editors and spokesmen represented the Republican party. Gideon Baily of *The National Era;* Samuel Bowles of *The Springfield,* (Mass.) *Republican;* Wm. Cullen Bryant of *The N. Y. Evening Post;* Wm. Lloyd Garrison of *The Liberator,* and Horace Greeley of the *N. Y. Tribune,* all these, the cautious and conservative no less than the irrepressible fanatic and radical, stood forth in opposition to the principle and pol-

icy of the "Two Year" Amendment and added their pleas to the indignant protests of the Germans.

To an anxious inquiry of Mr. Carl Heinzen, editor of *Der Pionier,* Lloyd Garrison at Boston branded the proposed Amendment in *The Liberator,* April 8, 1859 as "an act of political injustice * * * and we have scarcely a doubt that the proposed amendment * * * will be rejected by a decided majority."

Greeley's *Tribune* on April 25 addressed an earnest, not to say solemn "Word to the Bay State." Therein the people of Illinois read: "But we pray the Republicans of Massachusetts to vote down the proposed provision. It has been extensively paraded as a bugbear before the eyes of Republicans of foreign, especially those of German birth, and its adoption now would work enormous mischief, especially throughout the Free West. It might defeat the election of a Republican President in 1860. Just vote it down, let reason resume her sway among our Adopted citizens."

On April 28, *The National Era* printed at length an address of the German Citizens of Toledo, Ohio, protesting the act of Massachusetts and thus commended its sentiments: "We do not wonder at the feeling manifested by our German fellow citizens, but let them remember that the Republican party stands committed, not for, but against any such discrimination."

We have already noted that *The Press and Tribune* had called the attention of its readers to the official pronouncements of Republican leaders and bodies in various states protesting against the proposed Amendment in Massachusetts, to the formal protest of the Republican State Central Committee of Wisconsin in March, and to a like action by the same body in Iowa in April. The readers of Greeley's *Tribune* for May 3 read a long and earnest Address of the Republican State Central Committee of New York: among the signers being Horace Greeley, R. M. Blatchford, later one of President Lincoln's appointees to the Federal Supreme court at Washington, and Frederick Kapp. On May 11, *The Press and Tribune* informed its constituents that another prominent Republican leader had

spoken out against the act of Massachusetts. As he was a conspicuous figure in the national arena and regarded as among the few upon whom the Republican nomination for the Presidency might fall in 1860, his expression was of more than common interest. A portion of its editorial is given:

GOV. CHASE ON NATURALIZATION.

Governor Chase of Ohio in forwarding to the State Central Committee a communication addressed to him by German Republicans of Sandusky and vicinity with reference to the proposed naturalization law in Massachusetts, takes occasion to express his own views. He feels "very confident that the Committee fully concur in the almost, if not entirely, unanimous (Republican) opinion in this state, that no discrimination should be made by amendment of a state constitution or otherwise between citizens of foreign and native birth.

"Such has always been my opinion. I was therefore opposed, as is well known, to the proposition urged upon the consideration of our legislature, some two or three years ago, for the incorporation by amendment into our state constitution of a provision similar to that proposed in Massachusetts, requiring one year's residence only after naturalization, instead of two."

Writing apparently before the result of the election in Massachusetts was known, Dr. Bailey noting with concern "the sharp contest" within the Republican ranks of Massachusetts over the wisdom of submitting and considering the "Two Year" Amendment, observed:

"The Republicans of Iowa and other Western states have sent to Massachusetts formal protests, in the name of common cause of Republicans, against the ratification (of the Amendment). Apart from the local injustice it will inflict upon the adopted citizens of Massachusetts its effect upon the character of the party, throughout the Union, as the conservator of universal Freedom, will be injurious."

VI.

The facts just set out disclose clearly that the leaders of the anti-slavery forces in all of the Northern States west of New England, save New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and possibly Indiana, looked upon the "Two Year" Amendment as a serious menace to the Republican cause. They also make man-

ifest that the entire conservative element of the party—if Dr. Bailey and Horace Greeley are fair samples—as well as the radical element earnestly desired the defeat of the measure because it was felt that approval of the measure would place the party's chances in jeopardy in the approaching national election. As most of the influential editors and responsible leaders of the Republican party assumed—at least proclaimed their assurance and confidence—that the Amendment would be decisively defeated by the Republican electors of Massachusetts, it was decidedly disconcerting, not to say distressing, to learn from the returns on May 9 that the "odious Amendment" had carried by a considerable majority, carrying too in the most populous counties and in the chief cities where wealth and education may be presumed to be at their maximum.

The Press and Tribune might charge that the Democrats were the real marplots in compassing the adoption of the "Two Year" restriction but its editors and all weatherwise political leaders knew that the Germans and French and Scandinavians, Bohemians, Hungarians and Swiss, adversely affected by such legislation would not swallow such an explanation—the Republican party was in full control in Massachusetts and would have to assume and carry all the obloquy and condemnation resultant from the passage of the act and the favorable action thereon at the polls. Sundry ugly facts could not be ignored or tossed aside. The Philadelphia platform of 1856 seemed to be grossly disregarded. Public confidence among the Germans in the reliability of the party as to its pledges was rudely shaken by the conduct of the Republicans of Massachusetts. Alarm and suspicion, discontent and dissension, revolt and secession were not remote possibilities, but were imminent probabilities.

To dissipate this alarm became a matter of the greatest urgency. It was necessary immediately to convince the Germans that the Republicans in the West were not of the same ilk with their brethren of the Old Bay State; that they did not contemplate and would not give countenance to, or tolerate any like proposal in local legislation. Convincing and conclusive proof that the Republican leaders of Illinois were seized with anxiety, that suggested panic, was given the public in an aston-

ishing demonstration. In the Week and a half following May 9 every responsible Republican leader in Illinois came out in the open and in the most explicit unequivocal fashion declared himself.

The significance of the expressions here referred to are so important in determining subsequent developments in the career of Abraham Lincoln and played such a serious part in controlling the course and drift of things generally and they have been so utterly ignored—or rather they have been so utterly overlooked by all historians, that sundry literary canons are violated and all of the communications are given *in extenso*. In this way only can the reader of the present day appreciate the contemporary importance of the matter in issue and the enormous strategic significance attached to formal declarations by the responsible Republican leaders. The communications are presented in chronological order, without comment. Analysis, comparison and interpretation will follow.

VII.

On the 16th of May, *The Press and Tribune* of Chicago reprinted from *Die Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, the following letter addressed to the editor thereof, Mr. George Schneider:

Galena, Illinois, May 11, 1859.

My Dear Sir:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of yesterday propounding to me the following questions:

"1. Are you in favor of the naturalization laws as they now stand, and particularly against all and every extension of the probation [time]?

"2. Do you regard it a duty of the Republican party, as the party of equal rights, to oppose and war upon each and every discrimination that may be attempted to be made between the native-born and adopted citizens, as to the right of suffrage?

"3. Do you condemn the late action of the Republicans in the Massachusetts Legislature, [for] attempting to exclude the adopted citizens of two years from the ballot-box, as unwise, unjust and uncalled for?"

In answer to the first question I state that I am in favor of maintaining the present naturalization laws intact, and am utterly opposed to extending the time of probation.

In regard to the second proposition: I most certainly regard it as one of the highest duties of the Republican party to resist

all discriminations between native-born and adopted citizens as to the right of suffrage.

Referring to the third question: I desire to say, I can find no language to express my abhorrence of the action of those Republicans in the Massachusetts Legislature who passed the law proposing the Amendment to the Constitution of that State, excluding the adopted citizens from the right of suffrage for two years, and also the Republicans *out* of the Legislature who have just voted for the adoption of the Amendment. This action is the outgrowth of that "intolerant Know-Nothingism" which culminated in what is known as the "Heiss" of 1855 and is not only "unwise, unjust and uncalled for" but is a lasting disgrace and reproach to the State. Denouncing Know-Nothingism in the heyday of its power and strength, I should be unjust to myself if I did not now denounce its last and meanest act in securing the adoption of the illiberal, unnecessary and cowardly amendment to the Constitution of Massachusetts. The Republicans of Massachusetts—the Republicans in that State, who have voted for the amendment, have placed themselves beyond the pale of sympathy with the Republicans of the other states, who universally condemn their action and who will not hold themselves responsible for it in any way, shape, or nature. I am

Very truly yours,

(Signed) E. B. WASHBURNE.

Three days later the same journal reprinted from the *Staats-Zeitung* a letter from Congressman J. F. Farnsworth:

St. Charles, May 13, 1859.

Geo. Schneider, Esq.,
Editor "Ill. Staats-Zeitung."

Dear Sir:—I have received your letter of the 10th, in which you allude to the Amendment of the Constitution of Massachusetts, recently adopted in that State, by which naturalized citizens are debarred the right of voting until two years after the period of their naturalization.

Although this action of Massachusetts may be regarded as local, which cannot affect the citizens of other states, and with which we are not *directly* concerned, yet I fully agree with you in the expression that it is an "odious Amendment"—odious because it is insulting and unjust to that class of citizens who are affected by it. It discriminates between the native and the adopted citizen in favor of the former. *That is wrong;* and as a Republican, knowing something, I trust, of the principles of that party, and of the sentiments of its leading members, I believe I but echo the voice of the great mass of the Republican party when I protest against any attempt, come from what quarter it may, to fasten upon us or to make the Republican party in any manner responsible for a principle like that involved in the Massachusetts Amendment.

In my opinion, *nine tenths* of the Republican delegation in Congress, at least, are opposed to any change of the present

naturalization laws. They are satisfied with those laws as they *now are.*

These are at all events my sentiments, briefly expressed, and you are at perfect liberty to publish them; indeed, I am glad of the opportunity your note affords me of uttering my opinions through the channel of your valuable paper.

Very truly yours,

J. F. FARNSWORTH.

On Saturday evening, May 14, the Republicans of Springfield appear to have met in a general mass meeting in the hall of the Young Men's Republican Association. The nature and earnestness and design of their proceedings are exhibited in a most instructive manner in a special despatch that appeared at length in *The Press and Tribune,* May 18. The despatch with headlines follows:

THE MASSACHUSETTS AMENDMENT.

Resolutions of the Young Men's Republican Association at Springfield.

"Correspondence of the Press and Tribune."

Springfield, Ill., May 15, 1859.

I forward the accompanying copy of the resolutions adopted at a special meeting, held on the night of 14th inst., at the rooms of the Young Men's Republican Association, in accordance with the following resolution:

RESOLVED, That the Secretary be instructed to send a copy of the resolutions adopted at this meeting to all the leading Republican papers throughout this State, with a request that they be published.

Yours very respectfully,

JOHN C. BARKER,
Sec'y Y. M. R. A.

At a meeting held at the rooms of the Young Men's Republican Association, on Saturday evening, May 14th, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, has by recent vote, sanctioned a law depriving the foreign born American citizens of the elective franchise for two years after naturalization; and

WHEREAS, Silence thereto by political bodies elsewhere may be constructed as an approval of such provisions; and

WHEREAS, It has been the practice of the (so called) Democracy, north and south, to lay to the charge of the Republican Party all their own petty meannesses; and

WHEREAS, The great Republican party in their platforms, and elsewhere, have repudiated every principle that would in

any degree recognize any distinction between their fellow citizens of foreign birth and others; and

WHEREAS, We hold that every true Republican must rejoice at the manner in which the foreign vote has lately rebuked the demagoging Democracy, and shown, unequivocally, their warm love of Liberty and Equal Laws; and

WHEREAS, They are one with us in sustaining the great fundamental doctrine, enunciated by Jefferson, fought for by Washington, and defended and maintained by all the great and good of every country, clime and age, "That all men are created equal," therefore,

1st. RESOLVED, That we, Republicans of Illinois, regard with feelings of scorn, detestation and contempt any act calculated in any degree to overthrow the doctrines of the Declaration of Independence, be it from whom or where it may.

2nd. RESOLVED, By the Republicans of the city of Springfield, Illinois, that, disclaiming all right or inclination to interfere with the action of a sister State, we protest decidedly and solemnly against any provision by which a duly naturalized foreigner must be in the United States a period beyond five years, before he can lawfully vote; and assert that no discrimination should be made, by amendment of a State Constitution, or otherwise, between citizens of foreign and citizens of native birth.

WHEREAS, Our naturalized fellow citizens in the magnanimous enthusiasm with which they united in our State, at the recent elections, with their American brethren, have proven themselves on the sacred side of Freedom and Reform, therefore

RESOLVED, That we feel ourselves bound by every obligation of duty and honor to oppose earnestly and persistently every attempt to impair or abridge any privileges now enjoyed by them or their fellow immigrants.

4th. And WHEREAS, In the firm and manly position taken by the Hon. Henry Wilson, of Massachusetts, on the question of the naturalization laws, he has evinced the true principles and spirit of the doctrines of the Republican Party; as also have Messrs. Schurz of Wisconsin, Chase of Ohio, and Grimes of Iowa; therefore

RESOLVED, That we most heartily concur in and endorse the course pursued by these honorable gentlemen, and herewith tender our most sincere thanks for the able manner in which they have vindicated the integrity of the Republican Party.

JAMES OUSLEY,
President pro tem.

JNO. C. BARKER,
Secretary.

Springfield, May 14th, 1859.

The meeting at which the foregoing resolutions were adopted was not a dull, "cut and dried affair." There were speeches and apparently a generous outpouring of intense feeling. Among the speakers was no less a notable than Mr. William H. Herndon, the law partner of Abraham Lincoln and

later his biographer. His speech was evidently esteemed of more than ordinary importance, either by the speaker or by the audience, for it appeared at length in the columns of *The Daily State Journal* on May 17 in its account of the proceedings of the meeting of Saturday night, as follows:

MASSACHUSETTS CITIZENSHIP.

Speech of WM. H. HERNDON.

Mr. Herndon, after rapidly surveying the state of Europe, and the European crisis, and the struggles of the people of the continent for liberty and nationality, complimented the American people on their prosperity, peace and power, and spoke substantially as follows:

Finally, Mr. President, we are gathered here in this hall tonight—we Republicans, native and foreign-born—for the special purpose of giving vent to our sentiments and expression to our ideas on the late act of Massachusetts in relation to her naturalized citizens. We Republicans, as citizens of this city and the State of Illinois, do not pretend that we have any right to dictate to a sister State of this Union what institutions she shall or shall not have. But as American citizens—as Republicans—we have some dear rights; and when any law of any State projectingly acts upon us, reaches outside of that State, and by its spring and sweep, injuriously and destructively affects us, then we have an undoubted right to give speedy and quick utterance to our sentiments, and expression to our ideas in relation thereto. This far we go, but no farther. The late act of Massachusetts touches the whole Republican party from Maine to Georgia, and from New York to California, not only now, but far distant in the future, unless fully understood.

It is now well understood in Massachusetts that the Democracy of that State is partially, if not wholly, responsible for the passage of the Constitutional provision, odious as it is. I now hold a letter in my hand from Boston, which says in substance "that the Democracy really wanted the law passed; some voting for it, some scattering tickets in its favor on the day of the election, and all wanting it to pass, and voting stoutly for it. They could have killed if it they had wished to do so."

Were we not now quickly to speak out our ideas on this law of Massachusetts, it might be inferred, it would be meanly implied by the corrupt Democracy for political purposes, that the Republicans of Illinois approved of the act, together with its cruel and destructive policy, and rank injustice to our foreign-born citizens. The Republican principle on this question is—once an American citizen always an American citizen, with all the burthens, rights and privileges attaching thereto, and which is never to be taken away, except by forfeiture through the man's own acts. This law of Massachusetts denies or repudiates this, and we, as Republicans, do now and here say that we most heartily and unanimously disapprove this law, because it is contrary to fundamental principles, and for the following reasons:

First, because it is impolitic, and second, because it is wrong and unjust to all that class of American citizens who happen to be born on European soil, and others not Americans. These citizens, intelligent, good and patriotic men, have fled from the towering oppressive thrones—iron chains and glittering bayonets of the despots of the Old World, and have landed among us to make this their adopted free homes, supposing that there would and should be equality—at least, as broad as that laid down in the Dred Scott case—among all American citizens. We see, however, that they are to be somewhat mistaken, if the Legislature of Massachusetts vitalizes this latent constitutional power by an operative act.

This law is wrong and unjust. Once an American citizen always so. The Republicans all over this State have taken broad, deep and radical grounds against this law; against its cruel impolicy and its stinging injustice; and so now and here tonight, in this Republican hall, we solemnly protest against it, in the name of Republicanism, and send out our protest to the world.

I have as a Republican long since and often in speeches and in print—in private circles and on the stump, all over this State, expressed my views on this subject, and have said that I know of no distinction among men, except those of the heart and head. I now repeat that, though I am native born, my country is the World, and my love for man is as broad as the race, and as deep as its humanity. As a matter of course I include native and foreign people, Protestant and Catholic, "Jew and Gentile." I go the full length of justice to all men—equality among all American citizens, and freedom to the race of man. That party—that class—that man or party who adopts different ideas and expresses them by word or act—gives vent by tongue or deed to them—is cruelly or wickedly despotocratic, though it may call its principles Democratic. In the center of its heart it is a despotism, soon to bloom into one-man, iron-willed Absolutism. Names are nothing, but principles are as deep as the world. The roots of things—the purposes and intents—are the tests. Look at this—justice and liberty to all men, and then at this—justice and liberty to a special few, and they to judge of the times and necessities. In the one is Heaven's justice broad and deep, and in the other despotism.

Republicans, score deep on your banner mortised and buttressed on the Philadelphia platform, and let there be no cowardly dodging for timid policy's sake from this, this ever-living vital principle, liberty and equality to all American citizens, native or foreign born, and freedom and justice to the race of men around the globe. With these principles nothing can impede your young, living, irresistible power, or prove victorious over you, for you have the sweep and power of God's great rushing currents to bear you on to victory o'er the world.

Mr. President, I conclude as I began, and by this principle I am willing to live or die—freedom and justice to all men—equality and liberty to all American citizens, native or foreign born, Protestant or Catholic; and may the chains of universal or partial despotism on mind or body—on individual or the race, be shivered and broken and snapt; and ring out loud and

long against the Bastile prison doors, crossed barred and iron grated—"Keeper, open this door and let us go out joyous, bounding and happy, for we too now are free by God's great law."

Tuesday, May 17, was a busy day for the Republican leaders of Illinois, for on that date three of the prominent spokesmen of the party composed extended and important replies to letters addressed to them by committees of Germans asking them for specific declarations as to their attitude on the subjects referred to. One was written by Mr. N. B. Judd, as a member of the Republican State Central Committee; another was written by Abraham Lincoln, and the third by Mr. Lyman Trumbull, U. S. Senator. They are presented in the order named:

Chicago, May 17, 1859.

To Messrs. Theobald Pfeiffer, E. Violand and Louis Deider:

Gentlemen:—Your communication on behalf of the German Club of Peoria reached Chicago during my absence in a neighboring State.

The State Central Committee is composed of eleven members, viz.: two from the State at large and one from each Congressional District. The distance at which they reside from one another renders it impracticable to assemble the Committee to act upon the subject matter of your communication. I had supposed that the position of the Republican Party of Illinois, in upholding equality among citizens, whether native or adopted, and hence its opposition to any burdens or restrictions upon the right of suffrage that should distinguish between classes of citizens, was so well defined that it did not require a repetition. The first State assemblage in Illinois, called for the purpose of organizing a resistance to the slave oligarchy, and at which the Republican Party was organized, met at Bloomington on the 29th day of May, 1856.

That Convention did not limit its action to measures only looking to the resistance of slave encroachments upon the rights of freemen, but it met the other question of Proscription, and adopted the following resolution:

"Resolved, That the spirit of our institutions, as well as the Constitution of our country, guarantees liberty of conscience, as well as political freedom; and that we will proscribe no one, by legislation or otherwise, on account of religious opinion, or in consequence of place of birth."

The Convention did not confine itself to words, but by its acts proved its good faith by nominating for some of its highest places your countrymen, Hon. Fred. Hecker and Hon. Francis A. Hoffman.

The Convention that nominated John C. Fremont assembled at Philadelphia in June of that year, and it confirmed the posi-

tion taken by Illinois by adopting as a part of its National Platform the following resolution:

"Believing that the spirit of our institutions, as well as the constitution of our country, guarantees liberty of conscience and equality of rights among citizens, we oppose all legislation impairing their security."

The incorporation of that resolution into the Philadelphia Platform was effected principally by the united efforts of the delegates from the State of Illinois, and by no one was it urged more earnestly than by our German friends in the delegation, George Schneider of the *Staats-Zeitung,* Greiun (Grimm?) of Belleville and H. Kreismann of this city. In the contest that followed, the Illinois Republicans maintained the position thus taken. The party has had another State Convention, viz: in 1858, and your countryman, Gov. Koerner, was its presiding officer. Such have been the principles and practices of the Republicans in Illinois and the history of the party on this question of Proscription.

The local history of the party will show that in all cases where it had the power, offices, honors and rewards have been meted out regardless of nationality or birthplace. The Republican press condemned, in no measured terms, this unjust discrimination proposed by Massachusetts as wrong and anti-Republican in principle, and oppressive to that noble band of adopted citizens, who, believing in freedom, free labor, free homes and free lands, had, side by side with the native-born, fought the political battles of freedom.

As a member of the State Central Committee, it never occurred to me that any one could doubt the hostility of the party in this State to any change in the laws by which the equality among citizens should be disturbed.

I believe that all the members of the committee agree with me in the opinion that all discrimination between native and adopted citizens is unjust in itself and a violation of the equal rights which are the basis of our free institutions. The action of a small fraction of the people of Massachusetts is, in my opinion, an act of tyranny and oppression that should be rebuked by the Republicans throughout the Union.

Respectfully yours,

N. B. Judd,

Chairman Rep. State Cen. Com.

Wednesday morning, May 18, the *Daily State Journal* of Springfield, contained the following editorial which is reproduced *in extenso:*

MR. LINCOLN ON THE MASSACHUSETTS AMENDMENT.

We are indebted to Dr. Canisius for a copy of a letter written by Mr. Lincoln, in reply to a note requesting his views upon the late action of the State of Massachusetts in restricting the right of suffrage. We subjoin the letter together with the note which accompanied it:

Springfield, May 17, 1859.

Editors Journal:—

I have received today a letter from Hon. Abraham Lincoln in regard to the "Massachusetts Amendment" and the proposed "fusion" of the Republican party with other opposition elements in 1860. This letter of one of the gallant champions of our State is in accordance with the views of the whole German population, supporting the Republican party, and also with the views of the entire German Republican press. It therefore would afford me pleasure if you would give it publicity through your widely circulated journal.

I am, yours, etc.,

THEODORE CANISIUS.

Springfield, May 17, 1859.

Dr. Theodore Canisius:

Dear Sir:—Your note asking, in behalf of yourself and other German citizens, whether I am for or against the constitutional provision in regard to naturalized citizens, lately adopted by Massachusetts, and whether I am for or against a fusion of the Republicans and other opposition elements, for the canvass of 1860, is received.

Massachusetts is a sovereign and independent State; and it is no privilege of mine to scold her for what she does. Still, if from what she has done an inference is sought to be drawn as to what I would do, I may without impropriety speak out. I say, then, that as I understood the Massachusetts provision, I am against its adoption in Illinois, or in any other place, where I have a right to oppose it. Understanding the spirit of our institutions to aim at the *elevation* of men, I am opposed to whatever tends to *degrade* them. I have some little notoriety for commiserating the oppressed condition of the negro; and I should be strangely inconsistent if I should favor any project for curtailing the existing rights of *white men,* even though born in different lands and speaking different languages from myself.

As to the matter of fusion, I am for it, if it can be had on Republican grounds, and I am not for it on any other terms. A fusion on any other terms would be as foolish as unprincipled.

It would lose the whole North, while the common enemy would still carry the whole South. The question of *men* is a different one. There are good patriotic men and able statesmen in the South, whom I would cheerfully support if they would now place themselves on Republican ground; but I am against letting down the Republican standard a hair's breadth.

I have written this hastily, but I believe it answers your questions substantially.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN.

We are glad Mr. Lincoln has written this letter. It is plain, straightforward and directly to the point. It contains not one word too much, neither does it omit anything of importance.

Mr. Lincoln occupies the same ground as does the entire Republican party of the nation, and his letter will meet with their cordial concurrence and sympathy.

The next day, Thursday, the *State Journal* contained the following response of Senator Lyman Trumbull to a letter addressed to him by Dr. Canisius, Charles Hermann and others, the same committee probably that addressed Mr. Lincoln; the editorial comment in introduction closed with the observation: "It has the ring of true metal."

Alton, Ill., May 17, 1859.

Messrs. Theodore Canisius, Charles Hermann and Others:

Gentlemen:—Unlike some of our political opponents who refuse to express their opinions on the propriety of introducing slavery into Kansas, because they do not live in the Territory, saying that if the people of Kansas [want it] it is their right to have it, and if they do not want it, they may, if the courts will let them, exclude it, and it is nobody's business out of the Territory, which they do, I am ready on all proper occasions to express my condemnation of illiberal and anti-Republican movements, no matter where they originate.

Loving freedom and hating despotism, I can never be indifferent as to which shall prevail in any country, and while I recognize the authority of each State in the Union to determine for itself the qualifications of its voters, I deny the position assumed by our opponents, that the citizens of every other State are precluded from the expression of any opinion as to the propriety of its action. I have, therefore, no hesitation in answering your inquiries in regard to the recent amendment of the Massachusetts constitution, excluding persons hereafter naturalized, for two years thereafter, from the right of suffrage. Such a provision creates an unjust discrimination between citizens, violates the great principle of equal rights, and is in the very teeth of the Republican creed. Massachusetts in adopting it has placed herself in opposition to every other Republican State, and to the Republican party in the country, which stands pledged in its National platform *to oppose all legislation impairing equality of rights among citizens.* While, therefore, I condemn the action of Massachusetts, I think the course of the Democrats, in striving to make political capital out of it, deserving of still greater condemnation. In the first place they stultify themselves before the country and repudiate the so-called *great principles* of leaving the people of each state *perfectly free* to form and regulate their own domestic institutions in their own way, by saying anything about the internal affairs of Massachusetts. Their mouths, if governed by principle, should be forever shut, no matter what Massachusetts has done. Secondly, they themselves in their attempts to deprive foreign residents in Minnesota of any participation in the formation of their State government, and rights of suffrage, long enjoyed, were guilty of greater outrage than the people of Massachusetts, for the latter (as I understand) have not attempted to interfere

with the rights of suffrage enjoyed by foreigners now residents of the State, but only to prescribe a different rule for those who shall come hereafter; while the Democratic party, not of an isolated State, but of the Nation, undertook in Congress to take away from persons of foreign birth, then residing in Minnesota, the right of suffrage which under previous acts of Congress and the Territorial Legislature they had long enjoyed. In this attempt they were defeated by the Republicans. Let Democrats answer for this attempt of the majority of their party in the nation to rob foreign residents in Minnesota of previously vested rights, before they attempt to arraign Republicans of the Nation for the action of a few in Massachusetts, contrary to the declared creed of the party.

Very respectfully,

LYMAN TRUMBULL.

On May 21, *The Press and Tribune* contained the following resolutions adopted at Peoria:

"Resolutions of the Republicans of Peoria."—At a meeting of the Republicans of Peoria, of which Dr. J. D. Arnold was the President and Wm. L. Avery Secretary, L. R. Webb from the Committee on Resolutions reported the following, which was unanimously adopted:

The Republicans of the city of Peoria, in meeting assembled, for the purpose of considering the recent act of the people of Massachusetts imposing additional restrictions upon the rights of suffrage of foreign-born citizens of that State, do

RESOLVE, That, as one of the charges preferred by our forefathers in the Declaration of Independence against the King of Great Britain was that he was endeavoring to prevent the population of these states, for that purpose of obstructing the law for the naturalization of foreigners and refusing to encourage their emigration hither, so we, viewing the recent unjust, oppressive and intolerant action of the people of Massachusetts, believe it to be incumbent on us to denounce the same in unmeasured terms, as directly promoting the very evils our forefathers complained of, and as contrary to the spirit of our free institutions.

RESOLVED, That believing, as we do, that the people of Illinois are greatly indebted to the foreign-born citizens for the absence of human slavery in our midst, and its numerous attendant evils, and also believing that the spirit of our institutions and the constitution of our country both guarantee liberty of conscience and equality of rights among citizens, we deem it to be the policy and the duty of the Republican party to invite and encourage the affiliation and cooperation of all men, foreign as well as native, to the end that the cause of freedom may be promoted and the material growth and prosperity of our country may be augmented.

The two letters which follow were taken from the same journal from which the resolution just given is reprinted. The first one appeared in the issue of the 24th and the second in

the issue of the 26th. The reasons for the delay in their publication in the American press was probably due to the circuitous transmission they underwent. Translation for the pages of the *Staats-Zeitung*, to whose editor they were both addressed, and then their subsequent publication in *The Press and Tribune*.

Princeton, May 18, 1859.

Editor of Illinois Staats-Zeitung:

Dear Sir:—I have received yours of the 16th inst., requesting my views on the following questions:

"1. Are you in favor of the naturalization laws as they now stand, and particularly against all and every extension of the probation [time]?

"2. Do you regard it a duty of the Republican party, as the party of equal rights, to oppose and war upon each and every discrimination that may be attempted to be made between the native-born and adopted citizens, as to the right of suffrage?

"3. Do you condemn the late action of the Republicans in the Massachusetts Legislature, [for] attempting to exclude the adopted citizens of two years from the ballot-box, as unwise, unjust and uncalled for?"

In reply I would say, that I am in favor of the naturalization laws as they are, and should oppose any law calculated to prejudice the rights of the adopted citizen. This is in substance a reply to your second question. It is, without question in my mind, the mission and duty of the Republican party to oppose all and every discrimination between the adopted and native citizen. In this respect there should be one rule for the stranger and the home born.

In answer to the third inquiry I do not see what moral right the Massachusetts Legislature or the majority of her people have to suspend [or] temporarily to abrogate, for it amounts to this, the right of suffrage of a certain class of her citizens. The amendment, therefore, to which you allude, is, in my opinion, "unwise, unjust and uncalled for." I deprecate this the more as it tends to distract and alienate those from co-operation with the Republicans who are really with us in regard to the great objects we would achieve. My notions of human rights are such as to incline me to the largest liberality in bestowing the right of suffrage. Whoever is arrayed on the side of Freedom in its conflict with Slavery, of whatever clime and of whatever creed, the same *politically* is "my mother and sister and brother."

Yours truly,

Owen Lovejoy.

Chicago, May 20, 1859.

Editor Staats-Zeitung:

Dear Sir:—On my return from Supreme Court last evening, I found your note of the 18th, asking my opinion as "Chairman of the Republican Central Committee of Chicago" of the recent Amendment of the Massachusetts Constitution.

I understand that Amendment to impose upon naturalized citizens a restriction of the right of suffrage not required of citizens born in this country. I regard this as unwise, unjust, anti-Republican, and against the spirit, if not the letter, of the Constitution of the United States. When the Constitution gave to Congress the power "to establish an uniform system of naturalization," and provided "that the citizens of each State should be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens of the several States," it certainly could not have been expected that any State would impose restrictions upon the exercise of the rights of suffrage not required by the naturalization laws of the Federal Government.

But whatever may be the Constitutional right of Massachusetts to adopt this amendent, I regard it as most unwise, unjust, and antagonistic to the great principles upon which the Republican party is based. It is unwise and unjust to create a distinction between a native and a naturalized citizen. When a man becomes naturalized, he voluntarily adopts our country as his own. He makes our country his country by choice, by preference. He becomes one of us. His home is with us. His fortunes, his interests, his family, his all, become identified with ours. Is it not as wise as it is just, that when he has thus clothed himself with the rights of American citizenship, he should be made to feel that he was a welcome addition to the great brotherhood of freemen which compose the Republic?

While all must respect the feeling of attachment with which all good men remember their Fatherland, yet it is clearly the policy of our country so to treat her adopted citizens as to make them regard all nationalities as secondary to the grand idea of American citizenship.

This amendment, creating, as it does, an invidious distinction, has a tendency to keep alive and active that class feeling which all should seek to suppress. This discrimination which it creates is as unjust to the memory of the dead as it is to the worth and merit of the living. The history of our country is brilliant with the names of those born in a foreign land, whose love of our free institutions induced them to connect their fortunes with ours. The names of La Fayette, of Gallatin, Kosciusko, Pulaski, De Kalb, Steuben, Emmett, and many others in our earlier and later history, show that however a narrow and illiberal feeling may have at times manifested itself in particular localities, our country as a whole, in its policy towards the foreign-born, has been liberal and generous. Indeed, it is so obviously the interest of our country to encourage emigration and thereby develop our vast territories still unimpaired, that no other policy can prevail. The advantages of immigration here at the West, and especially to our own State and City, are so apparent, there has never been any difference of opinion among us on the subject. Our naturalized citizens have brought

industry, enterprise, wealth, good morals, and all the elements of prosperity to the Northwest, and here they have engaged in a generous and not unsuccessful rivalry with us, in building up and advancing the prosperity of our common country. I am sure there are none among us who would lessen their privileges. The policy of encouraging immigration and felicitating the settlement and naturalization of foreigners among us, in the early history of the Republic, found its most earnest advocate in Thomas Jefferson, that great statesman whose disciples are today found in the Republican party alone. In this policy, as upon the question of slavery, the so-called Democratic party has abandoned the principles of Jefferson. He embodied in the Declaration of Independence, as one of the grounds of separation from the mother country, that "He (the King of Great Britain) has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the laws for the naturalization of foreigners, etc."

The Republican party, recognizing as the basis for their organization the great principles of liberty so earnestly advocated by Jefferson, are seeking to bring back the Government to the policy of its founders. Since the so-called Democratic party has passed into the exclusive control of the Slave Power, it has very naturally manifested a jealousy of the free labor of the Old World, and its policy towards it has been narrow and unjust. The rapid addition of Free States in the Northwest, the result, in a large degree, of the emigration from abroad, has very naturally alarmed the Slave Power. Hence the illiberal provision of the Kansas-Nebraska acts; hence the voting down by Democratic slaveholding Senators of the amendments proposed by Republican Senators, to encourage the settlement of the public lands. Hence the defeat, by the same influence, of the Homestead Bill; hence the efforts of the pro-slavery Democratic party to extend slavery over free territory; hence the infamous Kansas outrages and Lecompton swindle.

The policy of the Republican party is to secure the unoccupied portion of this continent to the free labor of the world. The Democratic party controlled by the Slave Power is struggling to Africanize it, to appropriate it to slave labor. Hence that party is the natural enemy of the free labor which comes to us from abroad. The issue for 1860 is made up. The triumph of the Republican party will secure the public lands to free labor, without regard to birth-place.

The triumph of the Democratic party will secure, so far as the influence of the Federal Government can control it, the territories to slave labor. To furnish means of accomplishing this the slave trade is already openly, and under a Democratic Administration, carried on with impunity.

With this great issue before us, I doubt not the American and German Republicans will be found fighting side by side for freedom and free labor.

Our only strife will be to see who will do most to secure the success of those great principles of universal liberty which animate alike the American and the German Republican.

Very truly yours,

ISAAC N. ARNOLD,

Chairman Republican Central Committee.

Sufficient has been given, perhaps, to indicate the intensity of public interest during May in the "Two Year" Amendment among the electors of Illinois. The assertion, however, becomes incontrovertible if one will examine the amount and character of the attention given the subject in the foremost papers of Illinois, if we merely note the number of editorials; if we canvass the character of their expression and their length if we list the number of reprints of articles from other papers dealing with the subject, of communications thereon, of resolutions and speeches dealing with the Amendment. Somewhat of the attention and space devoted to it may be inferred from foregoing exhibits but the intensity of public interest can best be realized by a mere catalog of the titles. As a summary and premise for the analysis which follows two lists are here given. They are taken from two of the leading dailies of Chicago: The first from a Republican organ; the second from a Democratic organ.

The Press and Tribune contained the following articles, editorial and other:

April 29—"Republican State Central Committee of Iowa and the Naturalization Question"—Reprint of resolutions.
May 5—"Massachusetts"—Editorial.
May 6—"The Two Year Amendment in Massachusetts"—Editorial.
May 6—"The Massachusetts Two Year Amendment"—Letter from Senator Grimes of Iowa—Reprint.
May 11—"Two Year Amendment in Massachusetts"—Editorial.
May 11—"Gov. Chase on Naturalization"—Editorial.
May 14—"The Massachusetts Amendment"—Editorial.
May 16—"The Massachusetts Amendment"—Letter from Hon. E. B. Washburne—Reprint.
May 17—"The Massachusetts Amendment"—Editorial.
May 18—"The Democracy and the Massachusetts Amendment"—Editorial.
May 18—"The Massachusetts Amendment—Resolutions of the Young Men's Republican Association of Springfield"—Reprint.
May 21—"The Massachusetts Amendment:" (1) "Lincoln's Letter to Dr. Canisius." (2) "Resolutions of the Republicans of Peoria." (3) "Speech of W. H. Herndon."
May 23—Senator Trumbull to Dr. Canisius.
May 23—I. N. Arnold to Editor of *Illinois Staats-Zeitung.*
May 24—"The Massachusetts Amendment." Reprints Lovejoy's Letter to Editor of *Illinois Staats-Zeitung.*
May 26—"The Massachusetts Amendment." Reprints Judd's Letter to Germans of Peoria.
May 28—Letter of F. B. Blair on the Massachusetts Amendment.

The Chicago Times, the particular organ of Senator Douglas, during the same period, had the following articles upon the same subject:

June 6—Reprint of Ohio State Republican Platform.
May 5—"The Proscription of Foreigners"—Editorial.
May 7—"A Silly Effort to Shirk Responsibility"—Editorial.
May 11—"Interesting to Adopted Citizens"—Editorial.
May 13—"Republicans and the Two Year Amendment"—Editorial.
May 17—"Governor Banks and the Two Year Amendment"—Editorial.
May 19—"Republicans and Foreigners"—Editorial.
May 22—"The Panic in the Republican Party"—Editorial.
May 24—"Mr. I. N. Arnold's Letter"—Editorial.
May 26—"Where is Mr. Judd?"—Editorial.
May 27—"'Gov' Judd's Letter"—Editorial.
June 2—"The Republicans and Their Negro Allies in Massachusetts"—Editorial.
June 10—"The Disabilities of Non-Citizens"—Editorial.
June 15—"Naturalization and Voting"—Editorial.

Editors of our daily press are keen watchers of the currents and tides of popular interest. They are concerned with little else and give scant consideration to dead eddies, mere drift wood and back wash. They are seldom aroused by abstractions, "mere theories" or remote eventualities. The clash and clutch of human interests in the madding crowd hold them always in thrall.

VIII.

The exhibits just given indicate beyond all cavil that the Republicans of Illinois felt that they confronted a crisis and they appreciated that instant and decisive action was imperative if the plans of the party in the impending national campaign were not to be upset and their chances of success in 1860 obliterated. Sundry facts are worthy of note.

The Germans of Illinois took their cue manifestly from the Germans of Iowa. This is obvious in the letters addressed by Mr. Schneider to Congressmen Farnsworth, Lovejoy and Washburne: for the questions the latter specifically answer are precisely those drafted by Dr. Hillgaertner, et al., and presented to Senator Grimes and Harlan of Iowa. Mr. Schneider probably acted on his own initiative in presenting the interrogatories; but it would not be strange if Dr. Hillgaertner had

first suggested the manoeuvre to him, as he was familiar with German leaders in Chicago and intimately acquainted with the editorial force of the *Staats-Zeitung*.

There was not, however, the concerted action in Illinois that there was in Iowa. Mr. Schneider appears to have acted singly and for himself in the letters he addressed to Messrs. Farnsworth, Lovejoy, Washburne and Arnold. Two of his letters were dated on the 10th; one on the 18th and the other on the 20th. Committees seem to have been organized as in Iowa but without concert of action, one with another. Thus the committee at Peoria does not appear to have included the members of the one at Springfield. Dr. Theodore Canisius, Charles Hermann and others at Springfield addressed the same letter to Messrs. Lincoln and Trumbull.

The influence of proceedings in Iowa on the course of events in Illinois is indicated not only in the similarity of the methods pursued, in the questions submitted, and in more or less concert of action, as in Iowa, but in the particular mention of Senator Grimes—naming him with Senator Wilson of Massachusetts and Mr. Carl Schurz of Milwaukee—in the resolution adopted at Springfield on the night of May 14. The specific commendation of Iowa's junior Senator is rather substantial evidence indicating the direct and positive influence of the antecedent developments in Iowa upon the course of events in Illinois.

The stress of things produced by the demand of the Germans for explicit declarations from the Republican leaders in and about Chicago is illustrated by a minor incident not uninstructive here. Mr. N. B. Judd, next to Messrs. Lincoln and Trumbull was perhaps the most influential party chief among the Republicans of Illinois, at least of northern Illinois. For some reason his letter of May 17, of even date with Lincoln and Trumbull's responses to Dr. Canisius was not published in the American papers until May 26. Apparently the fact that he had been addressed by Messrs. Peiffer, Violand and Deider of Peoria was either known or suspected; for on May 26, *The Times* of Chicago came out with a half column leader headed: "Where is Mr. Judd?" The public was told that "Washburne,

Lovejoy, Trumbull, Arnold, Lincoln and a number of Republicans in Illinois have published letters repudiating the actions of the Republicans of Massachusetts * * but never a word from Mr. Judd." The Democrats had a fine opportunity for first class bear-baiting and did not refrain. Mr. Judd's letter appeared in *The Press and Tribune* on the same morning that *The Times* contained the editorial just cited.

If any additional proof were needed to clinch the assertion of *The Express and Herald* of Dubuque, that the Republicans of Illinois were in a real panic it is abundantly afforded in the contents of the resolutions adopted at Peoria and Springfield. Their language not only imports that the Germans had been grossly mistreated, insulted and outraged by the "Two Year" Amendment in Massachusetts but it declares that the liberties and the best memories of the American people were thereby assailed and put in danger. One of our major grievances against King George III was his harsh treatment of the forbears of the Germans and for them our fathers spilt their blood and treasure in the glorious revolution. More than this the Peorians proclaim that the freemen of the North and of Illinois in particular were "greatly indebted to the foreign born citizens for the absence of slavery in our midst and its numerous attendant evils." Such allegation, while interesting and instructive and supremely flattering to the *amour propre* of the sensitive Germans, must have been astonishing information to lusty Americans and Know-Nothings, information that must have produced either complete stupefaction or intense exasperation and revulsion. But whether true or fallacious, the fact that the Republicans of Peoria would thus proclaim their appreciation of the momentous influence of the Germans in our common life and polity from the outset of our national life demonstrates the alarm, not to say the desperation, of the Republican managers in Illinois in May, 1859.

The same conclusion follows from the character of the contents of the resolutions adopted at Springfield. Their language is not so pronounced and sweeping as was the case with those adopted at Peoria—the difference in the number of Germans in the immediate neighborhood may account for the dif-

ference in the ardor and anxiety displayed—nevertheless the same alarm is exhibited. Moreover, it was displayed in a practical fashion that indicated that the party managers deemed energetic action urgent. The managers and the mass meeting directed the officers of the meeting to send copies of the resolutions to all parts of the state and to secure their widest publication. Such a proceeding by practical politicians in the state capital, at the instigation, or at the least with the approval of the party chiefs, was a fact of the deepest significance. Little bands or groups of missionaries and philanthropists frequently proceed thus, without political significance; but such a meeting as that on the 14th of May in the Republican Hall and such a series of resolutions and such a program of propagandism were facts of maximum political significance.

Contemporary accounts do not show whether or not Mr. Lincoln attended the meeting at Springfield on May 14; but it is unlikely that he did do so, as the fact would have been widely heralded. We may assume that the meeting, however, was not without his knowledge and approval for it is inconceivable that local leaders, many of whom were ardent promoters of his political interests, would go ahead reckless of his adverse opinion. This conclusion is almost compelled by the presence and participation in the proceedings of his law partner, Mr. Wm. H. Herndon. Partners in practical business are not necessarily co-workers in politics. But in this instance there was complete reciprocity of interest—although not perfect accord always in practical application of views or concurrence as to time and place for expression or action—and a mutual consideration that makes certain the conclusion that Mr. Herndon did nothing and said nothing that night without feeling that his distinguished associate in business was not only not averse but approved. We may presume confidently that there had been more or less conference between them and other local leaders as to the nature of the danger threatening from the Germans.

IX.

The various letters from the Republican leaders present sundry interesting and some very instructive phases. They vary widely in the art of their expression, in the tactics of the writers, in the degrees of prudence and in the vehemence displayed in discussing the various phases of the matter in issue. The art of Mr. Lincoln's letter to Dr. Canisius, its political significance and its superior efficiency can only be appreciated by close comparison.

The kindest, the mildest letter, in some respects the most considerate of the sensibilities of opponents is that of Congressman Lovejoy's. He is concise and unequivocal. He confines himself entirely to dissent from the principle of the act but refrains from harsh criticism of those responsible for the "Two Year" Amendment. There is a grace and charity that seems remote from the hurly-burly and clash of politics. It suggests the idealist and philanthropist, the philosopher and the preacher, rather than the keen, poised politician, alert to conserve his forces and counterbalance against reaction.

Congressmen Farnsworth and Washburne indulge in strong language. Mr. Farnsworth brands the act of Massachusetts as "odious," pronounces it "insulting and unjust" and "protests" against any one charging the Republicans with responsibility therefor. Congressman Washburne is much more vehement and sweeping in his observations. He asserts his "abhorrence of the action of those Republicans of Massachusetts." He refers to it as "this last and meanest act;" as a recurrence of "Intolerant Know-Nothingism;" and he proclaims that the Republicans of Massachusetts who supported the Amendment had "placed themselves beyond the pale of sympathy" of Republicans elsewhere who "universally condemn their action."

Such characterization no doubt effectively expressed the feelings and the sentiments of the Congressmen quoted and no doubt thoroughly satisfied the utmost demands of the Germans immediately in mind. But such vigor, such slashing epithet and vehemence of denunciation "cut both ways", as experienced politicians know full well. The physical law of ac-

tion and reaction operates in politics. Such language would produce resentment and recrimination among "Americans" and sometime Know Nothings and among all those in Massachusetts who had given countenance and support to the Amendment in question. If the majorities in their respective districts made Congressmen Farnsworth and Washburne safe and indifferent to the feelings of those criticized, or of their friends and sympathizers, they might be reckless as to consequences. Otherwise they were imprudent and impolitic. If either Congressman had or might have some far-reaching plans, the realization of which ultimately depended upon the good will and concurrence of fellow Republicans in Massachusetts, New Jersey and other states where sentiments similar to those prevalent in Massachuetts were not uncommon, then such harsh and sweeping criticism and denunciation were not merely imprudent but utter folly.

The letters of the two party field marshals, Messrs. I. N. Arnold and N. B. Judd, were much more effective in these respects. They were very adroit in their comment and prudent in their criticism. There is little or nothing in their letters that would arouse virulent retort or produce violent resentment. Each one dwells upon the positive and substantial efforts of the Republican Party to encourage liberal legislation in state and national government beneficial to the foreign born. Mr. Arnold enlarges effectively upon the studied discrimination enforced or urged by the pro-slavery leaders in Congress against foreigners in recent or in pending legislation—especially in the Homestead bills. Mr. Judd was particularly strong in the presentation of his views. He emphasized the well known efforts of the Republican party and its leaders not only to insure the foreign born equality before the law but also to promote Germans in respect of public honors. Of the letters of both it may be said that while both easily commended themselves to Germans and both were lacking in harsh comment which would provoke counteraction, both would dull and deaden the energies of Americans and nativistic propagandists. Their contents would enhance the chances of Republican success in and about the cities of Chicago, Peoria or Quincy, but not in the

counties of Logan, Madison, Mason, Morgan and Sangamon, counties, wherein Southerners swarmed and old-line Whigs and supporters of Fillmore predominated.

Senator Trumbull's letter is especially interesting in contrast with those just named and with that of his great contemporary. It is a strong letter, as we should anticipate from a statesman of the large calibre and staunch character of Senator Trumbull. But while he delivers some vigorous thrusts and satisfies the most captious of Germans, his letter does not stand comparison with the other letter addressed to Dr. Canisius on the same date, neither in style nor in substance.

Senator Trumbull needlessly asserts his courage. His character had been thoroughly tested and was well known to be stout and staunch. He does not berate his fellow Republicans in Massachusetts with harsh epithets that burn or scar, but he does present his criticism of Massachusetts in such a way as to make his fellow Republicans in that Commonwealth sting with the implications of his characterization. In what possible way could he in that year of grace have been more severe upon the electors of Massachusetts than by the deadly parallel he bluntly suggests between the iniquities in Kansas under the ruthless slavocrats and the injustice done the foreign born and naturalized citizens by the discrimination enforced against them in the Commonwealth whose citizens serenely assumed primacy in culture and christianity; and on occasion were not averse to asserting their superiority? Even ardent Abolitionists of the Garrisonian persuasion might conceivably resent such a damnatory implication.

He concedes the right of a State under our Federal scheme to conduct its domestic policy as its electors may deem appropriate, yet he contradicts his concession by the nature of the criticisms he applies. A right in law implies a duty on the part of others to respect its exercise and to submit in silence or with grace if we disapprove.

Senator Trumbull's condemnation of the Democrats because they sought to make "political capital" out of the act of the Republicans *et al.* in Massachusetts must have produced a sardonic smile when Democrats read it or heard of it. He

counters with but little force when he shows that the Democrats really were as bad as the Republicans in this matter, and even worse because they were doing violence to their pet dogma of popular sovereignty when they criticized the electors of Massachusets for enacting the "Two Year" Amendment. The inference from this counter was again the deadly parallel between Kansas and Massachusetts.

He seems to make a more vigorous and effective thrust when he refers to the effort of the Democrats to deny the right of suffrage to aliens resident in Minnesota at the time the act for the admission of that state into the Union was on its passage through Congress. Conceding the point his counter assertion was negative: it meant that the Republicans were as bad as the Democrats and Germans could not count upon superior treatment from the Republicans. To say that the other fellow is just as bad as we are or given to like reprehensible tactics is public confession that our course is not creditable. Senator Trumbull, however, shot wide of the real mark, and for him, strangely missed the real point in issue in his reference to the constitution of Minnesota. The two cases were not coincident or parallel at all. In the case of Minnesota the Democrats sought merely to deny the right of suffrage under the new constitution submitted to Congress to *aliens,* to-wit, foreign born not yet naturalized. Their design did not affect naturalized citizens adversely in any manner. In Massachusetts, on the other hand, naturalized American citizens, the peers under our great Federal charter and laws of any and all of the lineal descendants of the Pilgrim fathers were specifically barred from equal rights and privileges in the electoral franchise, until they could certify an additional residence of two years. This was a bald and open discrimination between American citizens. A Carl Follen, a Francis Lieber, a Carl Schurz did not have the same right in respect of the ballot and public office in the Great Commonwealth of the Puritans that an ignorant, stupid, vicious runaway Negro from the Dismal Swamp enjoyed after a single year's residence. This was a blazing contrast that loomed huge and disagreeable on the horizon and

explanation or palliation but aggravated the offense. Frank disapproval alone sufficed.

Senator Trumbull wrote Dr. Canisius, as he spoke in the arena. He had his eye fixed solely upon the great enemy of the public welfare as he viewed the prospect, namely the Pro-Slavery party, and he directed his fire chiefly with that opponent immediately and ultimately in view. The allurement of Germans, the prevention of their defection, the allayment of their discontent and suspicion in order that their numbers and tremendous energy as one of the major corps of the Anti-Slavery forces might be conserved and enhanced—such was the primary consideration of Senator Trumbull. The intense feelings of "Americans" and Nativists; the keen sensibilities of puritanical folk who disliked the liberal notions and jovial customs of the foreign born; the rancorous hate of religious fanatics and the persistent malevolence of nativistic zealots and factionists —these matters that count always and must always be included carefully in the reckoning were not foremost in Senator Trumbull's mind and they do not appear to have received any incidental consideration. The possibility, let alone the probability that the potency of the Germans had an equivalent correlative that could prove no less potent for good or ill to the great cause he sought to promote by his letter to Dr. Canisius does not appear to have been in contemplation.

X.

The speech of Mr. Herndon, Mr. Lincoln's law partner, at the Republican Hall, Springfield, Saturday night, May 14, is in many respects one of the most interesting exhibits of all those given. His speech, like the resolutions, was given extensive publication. It appeared not only in the *State Journal* at the capital and in *The Press and Tribune* at Chicago, but it was printed at length in Garrison's *Liberator* at Boston, April 8.

The prominence of Mr. Herndon in the meeting in the nature of the case suggests concert of action between himself and his distinguished partner. In the first place it may be doubted if any serious political movement was undertaken by

the Republican leaders of Springfield between 1856 and 1860 without the immediate knowledge and advice, or general approval of Mr. Lincoln. The fact that Mr. Herndon's speech was printed at all and so widely published, suggests prearrangement in the well known law office on the Courthouse square. The intimacy of the partners, their general harmony of views and Mr. Herndon's hearty desire to further the ambitions and advancement of his associate are well known, and any other conclusion is inconceivable.

Mr. Herndon's speech, however, was not in his best vein. Its style is rather highflown and the reasoning sentimental; not nearly so strong as his published correspondence and his *Life of Lincoln* demonstrate him to have been capable of when at his best. It may not be fair to hold him accountable for what may have been a hastily written newspaper report of his speech, but its character and contents indicate strongly that the printers set it up from prepared copy.

There is not a little in the speech that smacks of Garrisonian idealism and New England transcendentalism. His philanthropy embraces the world and includes high and low alike. The idealist, however, keeps his feet on the ground. He displays the practicality of the wily politician and plays directly upon the sensibilities of the Germans with the zeal of the average stump speaker.

He apparently made a wide survey of the struggles of European peoples for freedom and constitutional government and insinuated, if he did not directly assert, that the French, the Germans, the Greeks, the Hungarians, the Italians, were all of the Lord's elect, all parts of one stupendous whole that comprehends the European refugee and the hapless slave. Much of his reasoning, however, will not stand sharp scrutiny. This fact arouses no little curiosity as to the actual knowledge his law partner had of the speech before it was delivered and before its publication. For his associate in business would not have made the errors in tactics and the slips in prudence that stand out so clearly in Mr. Herndon's speech.

Mr. Herndon declares that whenever the act of a state "projectingly acts upon us, reaching outside and by its swing

and sweep, injuriously and destructively affects us", then we —the citizens of sister states, nearby or remote, as the case may be—have a right to protest and, of course—if he means anything by the term *protest*—to take adequate measures to nullify such action. Such reasoning, when advanced by the Southern statesmen in rejoinder to hostile legislation in Northern states, was invariably treated with vaulting scorn by anti-slavery spokesmen.

He follows the lead of *The Press and Tribune* in alleging that the Democrats really conceived and pushed forward the unjust amendment in Massachusetts against which the Germans protest. He informed his audience and the state and nation at large that the Democrats "could have killed it if they had wished to do so." The letter from a correspondent in Boston, to which he refers, was doubtless from his long time intimate friend, Theodore Parker.

The total vote for the Amendment in the official returns reached only 21,119. That number was less than a third of the vote cast for Gov. Banks in 1856, who received 69,049 votes; and it was less than a fifth of the total vote cast for John C. Fremont for President in 1856, whose vote was 108,020. In other words, of the Republican electors in Massachusetts alone, there were four times as many who stayed at home on May 9 and either refused or neglected to vote against the Amendment. The entire Democratic vote in Massachusetts, either in 1856 or in 1858, did not aggregate 40,000. Mr. Herndon was not one to permit himself to deal in gross perversions of figures or facts, but like many another "progressive" in these advanced days, he was more or less heedless, not to say reckless, in assertion in the press and rush of controversy.

In some respects the most astonishing statement in Mr. Herndon's speech is his declaration: "Once an American citizen, always an American citizen." Such an assertion without qualification must have aroused violent memories in the minds of veterans of the War of 1812, who either heard or read his speech. It was in large part as a protest against this very doctrine that our nation waged a two years' war with Great Britain. Within a month four out of every five Republican

papers, and virtually all anti-slavery journals in the north were to break forth in one terrific chorus of furious denunciation of the concession by President Buchanan's venerable Secretary of State, Lewis Cass, of this self-same doctrine here proclaimed by Mr. Herndon, and Germans were to prove the most vigorous and the most vehement protestants against the doctrine which was then asserted by Austria, France, Germany and Russia against their emigrant sons. For years southern slaveowners and southern leaders had maintained that once a slave, always a slave, and they insisted on applying precisely the same principle to their fugitive chattels, no matter how long they might reside in friendly northern states and no matter what status might be conferred upon them by friendly legislation in their northern habitats. Yet their contention was universally treated with withering scorn by Abolitionists and anti-slavery Republicans.

Excluding the considerations here adverted to, which usually are matters of little concern to any but the hypercritical who count for little in the clash and clinch of party strife, Mr. Herndon's speech had no little strength. His humanitarian sentiments were generous and glowing with ardent feeling. His Democracy comprehended all classes alien and native, black and white, Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant, high and low. One law for all, one test of character and conduct under the law, equality of opportunity and uniformity of treatment under the constitution and the laws; these were ideals that commend themselves and compel acceptance. Germans must needs applaud.

In the light of the antecedent and collateral facts just exhibited, let us examine the character and contents of Abraham Lincoln's letter to Dr. Theodore Canisius.

XI.

The most noteworthy fact about Mr. Lincoln's letter to Dr. Canisius, it is not extravagant to say, was the mere fact that the letter itself was written and given out to the public. The writer was not only not much given to letter writing, but on

principle studiously avoided committing his views on moot matters to paper. He was an exceedingly able and alert practical politician and he knew the fatalities attendant upon effusive epistolary declarations. He was afraid of the notable inopportuneness or unwisdom of publication amidst the kaleidoscopic changes of politics and the constant shifting of public interest.[14] There must have been a serious exigency that compelled him to put himself thus on paper as he did in his letter of May 17 to the committee of Germans of the state capital.

The letter of Mr. Lincoln, like the one of Senator Grimes, was a model of conciseness and lucidity, pith and point. He expresses dissent and disapproval of the act of Massachusetts, but he hits the nail and nothing else. He does not enmesh himself as did so many of his confreres in a network of ugly implications. His language neither burns nor scars, yet it is luminous and flashes far and wide a principle of human equality that critics could not deny and those for whom it was intended would greet with hearty applause. He did not lay about with cat--o-nine tails or "go after" the foolish patriots and philosophers of the Old Puritan Commonwealth. At the same time he struck straight out at the act complained of by the Germans.

The letter to Dr. Canisius exhibits the surefooted lawyer, who is scrupulously observant of principle and realizes the depth and sweep thereof and the ground fact that a right, when it exists, must compel respect for those exercising it, as the correlative duty that insures the realization of the right. Thus his frank assertion that he had no right to "scold" the people of Massachusetts for their determination as to a matter of internal administration. But his explicit declaration to this effect is not inconsistent with his immediate assertion that he was opposed to the principle and policy of the Amendment in Massachusetts and that he would oppose its adoption in Illinois and in the federal jurisdiction wherever he had a legal right of expression and action.

[14] See *Works of Abraham Lincoln,* edited by M. M. Miller, Vol. IX. Letters to Schuyler Colfax and to Geo. D. Prentice. The latter Lincoln held for some time in his possession, uncertain as to the advisability of forwarding.

While there is no "protest" against the act of Massachusetts, no denunciation and no ugly implications in Mr. Lincoln's communication which could give just offense to his fellow Republicans in that state, nevertheless, his letter does plainly pronounce the "Two Year" Amendment unjust and to be deplored. We cannot, in the nature of the case, exercise our just right of public discussion whereby we may condemn and deplore an act or policy without thereby passing an adverse judgment upon the persons or party responsible therefor. If, as he alleged, the spirit of our institutions "aim at the *elevation* of men", his assertion that he was consequently "opposed to whatever tends to degrade them," was a severe reflection upon proposers of the act in question. But the sturdy sons of Massachusetts could not complain of this inference, for Democracy and free speech are not possible otherwise.

The most severe reflection upon the recent act of Massachusetts is strikingly suggested in Mr. Lincoln's reference to his reputation—"notoriety", as he phrases it—"for commiserating the oppressed condition of the negro," which might be expected to cause him to oppose "any project for curtailing the existing right of *white men,* even though born in different lands and speaking different languages from myself." This bare suggestion—or more correctly, this slight hint, so concise is his language—comprehends and meets the bitterest complaints of the protesting Germans and the most contemptuous and damaging denunciation of the Democrats. It exalted the central principle of all the anti-slavery forces and none of the leaders of the Opposition in Massachusetts could take just exception to the inference to be drawn therefrom.

The curious and the cynical may be asking the question whether or not the sentiments given expression in the response to Dr. Canisius reflected deep seated convictions or merely the opinion of the moment compounded of dread of party defeat and desire to placate the belligerent Germans. Mr. Lincoln was a politician *par excellence,* whose weather-eye was both keen and farseeing. His contemporaries and his biographers all tell us, and his writings all confirm their opinion, that he was always guided in matters of grave concern by basic principles

and not by the vagrant winds of popular prejudice and passion or the fitful gusts of popular fancy or fury. Conclusive proof of this assertion is afforded us in his striking letter addressed to his boyhood friend, Joshua F. Speed of Louisville, on August 24, 1855, towards the close of which occurs precisely the same sentiment expressed four years later to Dr. Canisius: "I am not a know-nothing; that is certain. How could I be? How can any one who abhors the oppression of negroes be in favor of degrading classes of white people?"[15]

The distinguished Republican leader of Illinois was not in deed or in thought "playing" to the German vote in 1859. His expression on May 17 was the considerate outgiving of conviction arrived at years before when malevolent fanaticism was sweeping over the nation in ruthless tides, wrecking party crafts and blasting hopes and dreams of place and power and only those who had the stuff of true patriots and staunch statesmen in their makeup could resist the fury of the onslaught.

Mr. Lincoln's courage and farsightedness were displayed no less conspicuously in his answer to the inquiry of Dr. Canisius' committee, anent his attitude towards "fusion" of the Republicans "with the other opposition elements for the canvass of 1860." Here again we have downright expression, concise and unequivocal, hitting the mark only. If we lacked evidence of his courage, clear-headedness, large-mindedness and far-sightedness, we have it in this portion of his reply. And again, his frankness under the circumstances not only elicited the applause of friends, but compelled the admiration of party opponents and factional critics. In order to appreciate the significance of his expression we must realize somewhat of the drifts of political discussion among the Republicans of the other Op-

[15] The balance of the paragraph is not uninteresting:

"Our progress in degeneracy appears to be pretty rapid. As a nation we began by declaring that 'All men are created free and equal.' We now practically read it 'All men are created equal, except negroes.' When the Knownothings get control, 'All men are created equal, except negroes, foreigners and catholics.' When it comes to this, I shall prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty,—to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy."

position elements in the country at large in the four months preceding.

In December 1858 Greeley's *Tribune* had suggested that it would be wise for the opponents of slavery to consider the feasibility of a working alliance and suggested that the Republicans nominate the candidate for Vice President and the other Opposition elements pick the candidate for President. The realization of this proposal seemed to give the whip hand to the old-time Whigs and the followers of ex-President Fillmore, chiefly know-nothings and "Americans." Discussion was drifting in this direction when on April 26 Greeley published a powerful leader on "The Presidency in 1860." After showing in some detail the distribution of the Fremont and Fillmore votes in 1856 and demonstrating that the opponents of the Pro-slavery Administration, if they would but consolidate their forces, had a decided preponderance in the forthcoming contest, *The Tribune* said:

"Of course it is plain that a substantial, practical union of the electors who supported Fremont and Fillmore respectively, insures a triumph in 1860, even though there should be a scaling off on either side, as there possibly would be. We can afford to lose one hundred thousand of the Opposition vote in 1856 and still carry the next President by a handsome majority." The editorial then proceeds to point out that there is no material difference between the Whigs and the Americans on the subject of slavery and then observes as to candidates: "Most certainly we should prefer an original Republican—Governor Seward or Governor Chase—but we shall heartily and zealously support one like John Bell, Edward Bates or John M. Botts, provided that we are assured that his influence, his patronage, his power, if chosen President, will be used, not to extend slavery, but to confine it to the states that see fit to uphold it."

These sentiments of Greeley's paper—all of which must strike all to-day as preeminently sane and the very essence of common sense in practical politics—aroused the country over a veritable storm of protest and contemptuous comment from the radical and irrepressible anti-slavery editors and spokesmen. They immediately suspected the suggestion to be a

Machiavellian proposal; at best naught else than a concession that meant capitulation involving the abnegation of the party of freedom, another miserable compromise with the forces of darkness whereby principles gave way to policy and plunder. And the stiffbacked radicals would have none of it.

Greeley's editorial produced a violent reaction among the Germans. The German press, after the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, was by a considerable majority, radical and outspoken in its opposition to slavery, opposed to its extension and opposed to its very existence and not averse to summary measures for its extinction. The iniquities of the institution—particularly the frightful phases of the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave law—and some of the assertions of the Supreme court in the case of Dred Scott reminded "Forty-eighters" of the processes of tyranny under the oppressive rule of their Fatherland which they fled in 1848 and later years. An alliance, or any formal affiliation with the conservative whigs who resisted any interference with the rights of slaveholders aroused them to protest. Another fact provoked their wrath and fury.

Greeley's willingness to join with the "Americans" of the South and the remnants of the Know-nothings in the North was to Germans an unspeakable abomination, for their memories were full of bitter recollections of the harsh and mean and often brutal persecutions they endured during the heyday of Know-nothingism. As Germans regarded them, Messrs. Bates, Bell and Botts stood foremost in the country as sanctioning narrow, proscriptive legislation and by their silence, if not by speech, giving their countenance to the brutalities of Know-nothingism. Greeley's suggestion meant an unholy alliance with the powers of evil and hence the point blank question in Dr Canisius' letter to Mr. Lincoln—did he favor the "fusion" of the Republicans with the "other Opposition elements for the canvass of 1860?" Needless to say, the inquiry was grand strategy and masterly tactics—a tremendous drive at the very centre of the war zone.

Dr. Canisius and his confreres knew that there was intense and widespread opposition to "fusion" among staunch

anti-slavery folk, and they knew too, that Mr. Lincoln was aware of the intense feelings of the Germans in respect of anything that smacked of Know-nothingism. With Germans universally aroused in alarm and protest against the "Two Year" amendment, their plump question at that juncture was in truth a crucial test of the character and capacity of the man addressed. And with royal certitude he promptly replied.

Mr. Lincoln did not hedge himself about with saving clauses that would enable him to face both ways and deny or assert as circumstances and variable attacks might make convenient. He declared in the most direct, straightforward manner that he was in favor of fusion with any and all elements of the Opposition if the terms of the alliance could be arranged satisfactorily. There was one central fact—an irreducible minimum—on which all could stand, to-wit, antagonism to the extension of slavery. Idealists and realists, liberals and conservatives, could come together on this common ground. All can unite easily and effectively upon a universal issue. The great objective is the defeat of the party in power that favors or protects the evil complained of, and ballots, like bullets, are impersonal. It matters little or nothing whence they come if thereby opponents are routed and driven from place and power. Those who desired the overthrow of the Pro-slavery party should not stickle at minor and subsidiary considerations. If such matters were to be contemplated it would not be long before such petty considerations as diet, clothes and family would determine party action, and chaos would ensue.

Any dodging or juggling on the subject of slavery was given no countenance whatever. Any color of compromise on principle would be "as foolish as unprincipled;" and he would not lower the Republican standard by "a hair's breadth." But with this *sine qua non* assured Mr. Lincoln was frank to the point of bluntness. He would join forces with any party or faction, or group and he would follow the lead of any tried and true standard bearer whose character and guidon would inspire confidence and afford the greatest hope of success. And he states bluntly that he would "cheerfully support" a number of "good and patriotic men

of the South" if they would "place themselves on Republican ground." In the light of then recent discussion such an assertion could have meant but one thing. Mr. Lincoln would support Messrs. Bates, Banks, Bell, Botts or Cameron, should any one of them be nominated. To give out such a statement and right into the teeth of the militant Germans, was either a most daring and reckless assertion of independence or it was an act of supreme sagacity and perfect politics.

The premises of perfect politics, in the old Greek sense of the term, are what Montesqieu would declare to be the "necessary relations of things," or as Carlyle later was wont to put it, "the eternal verities." The premises Abraham Lincoln rarely failed to discern and to comprehend, and when realized he stood squarely thereon, regardless of the dissent or doubts or dread of shifty and timid souls about him. In the art of politics, in the adjustment of procedure to principles and prudence, the distinguished Republican leader of Springfield was a past master and his ability and achievement were never more effectively demonstrated than in his response to the interrogatories of Dr. Canisius and confreres.

Dr. Canisius, in his letter to the editor of the *Daily State Journal,* communicating Mr. Lincoln's reply of May 17, declared that the response "of the gallant champion of our state is in accordance with the views of the whole German population, supporting the Republican party, and also with the views of the entire German Republican press." This statement, of itself, is a superb tribute to Mr. Lincoln's sagacity and staunch character as a practical politician, who is the real statesman in fact. It signified instant approval of his position and views when he normally might have anticipated for a portion of his letter, disfavor, if not violent dissent.

Dr. Canisius indulged in excessive statement when he informed the *State Journal* that "the whole German population" and the "entire German Republican press" concurred in Mr. Lincoln's views. The editor of *Der Illinois Staats-Anzeiger* apparently allowed his intense satisfaction over Mr. Lincoln's unqualified expression of disapproval of the principle of the "Two Year" Amendment to induce the generous

conclusion that Germans were no less accordant with his views anent "fusion", but he was seriously in error as the developments of the next twelve months demonstrated. At no time before the national Republican convention met at Chicago, May 16, 1860, was any considerable proportion of the German Republican press agreeable to the nomination of Bell or Bates or Botts. The candidacy of Judge Bates had been announced some time before and his friends were promoting it vigorously, but the German press, generally speaking, treated it with either contemptuous silence or with downright denunciation. This hostile attitude steadily increased among the radical Germans until March it lead to an organized movement that gave a quietus to the hopes and plans of the friends of Judge Bates at the Chicago convention. But this is another story.

The matter of importance and of chief significance, however, is not the exact truth of Dr. Canisius' statement in his letter to the *State Journal* that Mr. Lincoln expressed the views of German republican editors, but the mere fact that he, Dr. Canisius, should so assert his belief and thereby express his great satisfaction with the reply of his fellow-townsman to the interrogatories of his Committee.

XII.

During his public career Abraham Lincoln wrote some notable letters, justly celebrated for their felicity and force of expression, their acumen and profundity, and marvelous effectiveness, but it may be doubted if he ever wrote any letter with greater skill and effect than his letter to Dr. Theodore Canisius. The literary art of the letter was perfect; directness and simplicity of language; neither fine writing nor magniloquence and no ponderous platitudes; merely lucid, luminous assertion strictly confined to the naked issue. As the editor of the *State Journal* appropriately put it: there was not a word too much and every word was needed.

In his response Mr. Lincoln not only satisfied the militant Germans, but he fastened them to him with hoops of steel by his subtle reference to his well known views and course re-

specting slavery, as a solid reason for his opposing any proposal that so much as squinted towards the political degradation of any class or body of white men. But he did so without giving just offense to those who might differ with him in opinion and conduct. There was a nice appreciation and observance of legal limits and rights of action and discussion and a perfect grace of reference and courtesy in consideration of the sensibilities of all directly and indirectly implicated.

But, while Mr. Lincoln satisfied the Germans completely on the major and immediate issue with which they were concerned, and his character and conduct as a public man gave them perfect confidence as to his sincerity and reliability, he did not go precipitately into denunciation of all dissentients. He frankly asserted his willingness to co-operate with those who held views contrary to his own on collateral and minor issues and he declared himself in language no man could misunderstand. He thereby cleared himself of adverse charges and dissipated all suspicions as to himself and at the same time extended and strengthened his own or his party's lines and made easy the way for alliances and affiliations with important contingents necessary if victory in the impending national campaign was to be achieved.

In the concluding sentence of his letter Mr. Lincoln says: "I have written this hastily." The statement is subject to various interpretations. It may mean precisely what it says, that he replied instantly to the interrogatories of the Committee of Germans who addressed without taking days for deliberations. Senator Grimes replied on the same day he received the letter from his fellow-townsmen of Burlington. But if it was intended to convey that he had written on the spur of the moment, without having given the subject much serious consideration, we may take it with several grains of salt. He was too familiar with the strange turns and twists of practical politics to be unmindful of the dangers of hasty, ill-considered expressions of opinion on moot matters, particularly when committed to paper. Letters may prove to be as troublesome as Banquo's ghost, appearing at every turn of the road in the most unexpected fashion.

For two months Mr. Lincoln had been reading or noticing accounts in his own state papers and in the press in the east of the intense and widespread agitation among the Germans produced by the proposal and adoption of the "Two Year" Amendment in Massachusetts, and he was too alert and able a politician not to have been pondering upon the import and probable consequences of the agitation. When the Republican state central committees of Wisconsin and Iowa put forth their protests against the Amendment, when Senator Grimes' letter was published in his own home paper and generally throughout the Republican press of the state, both German and American, he became keenly alive to the seriousness of the menace the agitation was to the future success of the Republican party in the great contest rapidly approaching. The letter to Dr. Canisius represented the reflections of weeks, however quickly written. When a master craftsman pens a line, "hastily written", it does not mean heedlessly written.

Mr. Lincoln's letter was written, we must conclude, primarily and chiefly with the approaching national Republican convention in contemplation. At the time he wrote the national committee of the party had not decided on the place of meeting, and he could not of course have presumed very strongly upon the selection of Chicago as the place of meeting. Ardent Westerners were then concerting plans to bring the convention west of the mountains. The party leaders of Pittsburg, Wheeling, Cincinnati and Indianapolis were severally hopeful that they might secure the prize for their own city. Chicagoans were then no doubt conscious of local ambition and looking with covetous eyes. Was Mr. Lincoln conscious of any stirrings of personal ambition and hopes that the deliberations of the convention might mean much for him as he penned the letter to Dr. Canisius? There is not a little to make one so conclude.

The Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858 had made Mr. Lincoln a national figure. Immediately anti-slavery and Republican papers began to suggest him for consideration for the forthcoming national convention as a suitable candidate for

the second and first places. Two or three illustrations may suffice to warrant the assertion just made. On November 24 *The Marshall County Times,* published in east central Iowa, told the Republicans of Illinois "to hang out their banners. . . . They may see their gallant Old Abe in the United States Senate and mayhap as its presiding officer." Three days later (Nov. 27) *The Eagle* published at Sioux City, Iowa, then the extreme northwest frontier town of the state, in dealing with "speculations", considers the suggestion of *The Chicago Democrat* that he be considered for the first place on the ticket. On December 2 *The Sioux City Register,* a Democratic paper, in discussing Greeley's scheme for doing away with national conventions, named Mr. Lincoln as one of the candidates for which Illinois would ask the electors to vote for President. This mention of the Republican leader of Springfield became more frequent during 1859. Of this fact we may certainly presume that Mr. Lincoln was aware, for his many friends and admirers would see to it that he was duly informed. In the national convention of his party in 1856 at Philadelphia he had received 110 votes for Vice President. He would not have been an ordinary mortal if he had not been stirred deeply by such expressions and suggestions and such events. His most intimate friends and associates, his closest observers, e. g., Messrs. Herndon, Trumbull and White, tell us that he was ambitious for political preferment and indulged in no pretentious modesty about the matter, although he was extraordinarily adroit in furthering his ambition and in securing the co-operation of friends without obvious effort so to do. We know that various admirers were pressing upon his attention, in the forepart of 1859, the advisability of actively seeking the presidential nomination. His various letters, in reply to such, modestly discounting or denying his fitness or chances, signify no substantial contradiction. It was not inconsistent with a keen ambition and lively hope that Fortune might smile with favor and his heart's desire might be realized.

In view of the tremendous public interest among Republicans and Democrats as to the probable consequences of the

violent agitation among the Germans over the conduct of Massachusetts and the great national distinction of Abraham Lincoln at the time we must conclude that in writing to Dr. Canisius he had not only the fate of the Republican party in the canvass in 1860 in mind, but especially his own probable consideration as a candidate of high potential for the greatest honors his party could confer. Any other conclusion would do violence to ordinary human nature as we know it. And this conclusion coincides precisely with the subsequent course of events, and makes clear transactions that otherwise would be inexplicable.

XIII.

Biographers of President Lincoln, and historians of the period immediately preceding the Civil War have, with one exception, exhibited little or no appreciation of the strategic significance of his letter to Dr. Canisius. Several do not notice it at all. Several refer to it or quote portions or all of the letter, some without comment and some with observations upon the liberality of the writer's views, but with no indication of a realization of the importance of the letter in relation to contemporary and subsequent events. Dr. J. G. Holland, alone, so far as the present writer can discover, discerned its vital significance and in his Life of President Lincoln, clearly pointed out the fact—but only so far as it related to the Germans.[16] Its importance with regard to the Nativistic elements was not appreciated. It is not uninteresting to note here that Dr. Holland was one of the associate editors of the *Springfield* (Mass.) *Republican* in 1859, whose editor-in-chief, Samuel Bowles, vigorously opposed the adoption of the "Two Year" Amendment, and hence his appreciation of the part the letter to Dr. Canisius played in the campaign that ensued.

Messrs. Nicolay and Hay, in their *Abraham Lincoln,* also quote at length from the letter to Dr. Canisius, but unlike Dr. Holland, saw in it apparently merely a statement of his "opposition to the waning fallacy of know-nothingism," the views

[16] Holland, The Life of Abraham Lincoln, p. 197.

therein being interesting on philosophical grounds but of minor importance and in the grand aggregate of passing significance in the course of events; such at least seems to be the clear inference from their allusion to it.[17]

In the published Recollections of two distinguished Germans, Messrs. Gustav Koerner and Carl Schurz, the "Two Year" Amendment is of course referred to because both men were prominent actors in the drama of the period, and they dwell upon its importance, but the deep significance of the letter to Dr. Canisius is not indicated. Gov. Koerner merely mentions it in his *Memoirs,*[18] and Carl Schurz does not so much as refer to it either in his *Reminiscences* or in his *Abraham Lincoln.*

Such non-interest in the letter to Dr. Canisius by two such German notables, and contemporary actors in the drama dealt with, may seem to warrant suspicion of the validity of the conclusion herein insisted upon as to the strategic importance of Mr. Lincoln's letter. The point contended for cannot be easily established because it is a relative matter and the fact in contemplation can not be measured or weighed or estimated in any wise save from different angles and baselines, which may afford us views that give us correct perspectives.

Dr. Holland's judgment was expressed in 1865-66 while his recollections of personal experiences and observations of the actual preliminaries of Mr. Lincoln't first nomination were still vivid. Messrs. Koerner and Schurz wrote after nearly half a century had elapsed. They naturally enlarged upon the matters in which they were personally immediately interested: their own part in the drama. A petty fact, but one that may indicate somewhat of the effect of the flight of the years, is Mr. Schurz's assertion as to his celebrated speech in Faneuil Hall on April 18 of that year; "Perhaps it did contribute," he says, "a little to the defeat of the 'Two Year' Amendment."[19] Within three weeks of the date of his speech the "odious Amendment" was carried at the polls!

[17] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln:* A History, Vol. II—181.
[18] Koerner Memoirs, Vol. II, p. 181.
[19] Schurz, *Reminiscences.* Vol. II, p. 126.

The facts herein set out at such length, it is submitted, fully justify the present writer's contention that the letter to Dr. Canisius was a fact of the highest strategic importance and was recognized as such at the time. The judgments of historians *ex post facto,* like the recollections of actors long distant from the days and scenes of events related, are as likely as not to deal with the spectacular facts that loom large in popular memory, rather than with the minutia that constitutes the mass of reality and in the large controls the course of things. Contemporary opinion, when it can be clearly discerned and assembled and displayed, is a more accurate and substantial judgment than the solemn pronouncements of learned "research" historians. The pithy letter of Dr. Canisius himself to the editor of *The Daily State Journal* communicating Mr. Lincoln's reply, indicates very clearly how highly he esteemed the letter. He was manifestly alive to the nation-wide interest in any opinion Mr. Lincoln would express and he was more than pleased, he was delighted, to secure the explicit declaration from his fellow townsman. The extensive circulation given the letter in the German and American press signalizes it, and the contemptuous reference of *The Daily Express and Herald* of Dubuque, quoted at length in the first page of this study, to "the whole brood of Republican leaders from Lincoln to Wentworth," and their "disclaimers" strongly suggest the conclusion here urged.

The most interesting parcel of evidence as to the significance of the letter to Dr. Canisius is afforded us in a letter written nearly two months later to Mr. Schuyler Colfax, then one of the foremost Republican leaders of Indiana and of Congress. It portrays vividly the troublesome perplexities and the ticklish questions that were then harassing the practical party leaders. It should further be realized that the writer was then one of the keenest, shrewdest, most active and farseeing practical politicians in the nation. His letter is given entire:

Springfield, Ill., July 6, 1859.

Hon. Schuyler Colfax:

My Dear Sir:—I much regret not seeing you while you were here among us. Before learning that you were to be at

Jacksonville on the 4th, I had given my word to be at another place. Besides a strong desire to make your personal acquaintance, I was anxious to speak with you on politics a little more fully than I can well do in a letter. My main object in such conversation would be to hedge against divisions in the Republican ranks generally, and particularly for the contest of 1860. The point of danger is the temptation in different localities to "platform" for something which will be popular just there, but which, nevertheless, will be a firebrand elsewhere, and especially in a national convention. As instances, the movement against foreigners in Massachusetts; in New Hampshire, to make obedience to the fugitive slave law punishable as a crime; in Ohio, to repeal the fugitive slave law; and squatter sovereignty, in Kansas. In these things there is explosive matter enough to blow up a dozen national conventions, if it gets into them, and what gets very rife outside of conventions is very likely to find its way into them. What is desirable, if possible, is that in every local convocation of Republicans a point should be made to avoid everything which will disturb Republicans elsewhere. Massachusetts Republicans should have looked beyond their noses, and then they could not have failed to see that tilting against foreigners would ruin us in the whole Northwest. New Hampshire and Ohio should forbear tilting against the fugitive slave law in such a way as to utterly overwhelm us in Illinois with the charge of enmity to the Constitution itself. Kansas, in her confidence that she can be saved to freedom on "Squatter Sovereignty," ought not to forget that to prevent the spread and nationalization of slavery is a national problem, and must be attended to by the nation. In a word, in every locality we should look beyond our noses; and at least say nothing on points where it is probable we shall disagree. I write this for your eye only; hoping, however, if you see danger as I think I do, you will do what you can to avert it. Could not suggestions be made to leading men in the State and Congressional conventions, and so avoid, to some extent at least, these apples of discord?

Yours very truly,

A. Lincoln.

Manifestly with such clear foresight and such strong convictions and sense of caution it must have been an urgent belief that a serious danger threatened the Republican party in 1860 that could have compelled Mr. Colfax's correspondent to pen the letter to Dr. Canisius' committee on May 17. Indeed, it must have been a state of mind approximating the "panic" contemptuously asserted by Mr. J. B. Dorr of Dubuque.

Furthermore, Mr. Colfax's correspondent at Springfield was obviously gravely concerned lest the forthcoming national convention "blow up" with the heat engendered by local

issues and there are many reasons to suspect that he was not immediately concerned with local interests or nearby constituencies. Senator Trumbull was not seriously urged for nomination for either the Vice-presidency or the Presidency. Mr. Lincoln was being urged then in various parts of the country and he was aware of the fact. His injunction to maintain strict secrecy as to his writing is highly suggestive that his own possible personal fortunes were not remote considerations in his mind. But whether he was specifically conscious of such a possible personal interest in the ingathering of the forces, his letter to Mr. Colfax was pre-eminently prophetic and accurately described the actual developments in the preliminaries and proceedings of the Chicago convention.

XIII.

In the way of a summary, the following general assertions seem to be warranted:

The submission of a proposed amendment to the constitution of Massachusetts by the General Court of that Commonwealth denying the electoral franchise to foreign-born citizens until they could certify a residence of two years after naturalization aroused Germans to violent indignation and protest throughout the nation and particularly in the states of the Northwest in the forepart of 1859.

Republican editors and spokesmen instantly very generally perceived that the discontent of the Germans and their threatened revolt from the Republican party because of the proposed Amendment in Massachusetts constituted a serious menace to their party in the approaching national presidential canvass of 1860.

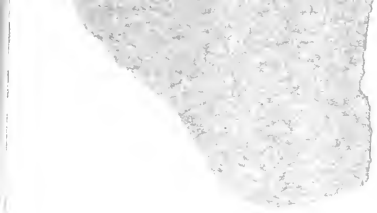
The Germans of eastern Iowa under the leadership of Dr. George Hillgaertner and John Bittmann of Dubuque, Hans Reimer Clausen, Theodore Guelich and Theodore Olshausen of Davenport, seem to have been the first to have conceived the plan and to have decided upon concerted aggressive action to compel the Republican leaders to declare themselves openly with respect to their attitude towards the "Two Year" Amendment.

The Germans of Illinois did not awaken to the seriousness of the act submitted in Massachusetts as soon as did the Germans of Iowa. Upon its adoption on May 9, they became aroused and determined upon aggressive measures similar to those pursued in Iowa. Under the leadership of George Schneider of Chicago, Theodore Pfeiffer of Peoria and Dr. Canisius of Springfield they addressed interrogatories to all of the responsible Republican leaders of Illinois identical, or similar in content, with those addressed to the Congressional delegation of Iowa. The responses given in Illinois followed in the large the lines of the reply sent the Germans of Iowa by the junior national Senator of Iowa, James W. Grimes.

All of the replies addressed to the Germans of Illinois were written upon the assumption, either frankly asserted, or by clear implication conceded, that the votes of the German Republicans were essential to the success of the national party in the approaching presidential canvass in 1860 and that German Republicans were among the staunchest anti-slavery forces within the party.

Abraham Lincoln's reply to Dr. Theodore Canisius and confreres of Springfield was the only one of all those published which exhibited an appreciation of the correlative importance of the Nativistic elements, especially the fanatical and factional Americans and decadent Know-Nothings who counted for more in the Republican party and in the Anti-slavery forces than they did in the Democratic party.

The two facts just named—the importance of the German vote and the equal importance of the Nativistic votes—constituted the grand strategic facts that determined the course of events. Mr. Lincoln clearly discerned them and future developments demonstrated his superior foresight and preeminent prudence. These two major facts compelled the compromise in the national convention which resulted in a denunciation of the "Two Year" Amendment in the national platform adopted at Chicago and in the nomination of the man who sent one of the replies to Dr. Canisius. The array of facts which justifies this assertion the present writer hopes sometime to display.



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